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THE COWBOY

II

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By

E. Hough

Author of The Singing Mouse Stories etc.

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THE STORY OF THE COWBOY.

CHAPTER X.

DRIFTS AND STAMPEDES.

The life of the cowboy in the early days of the West was a series of pictures of unusual and striking themes. The panorama of the plains dealt with no small things for subjects, not the turn of a gown nor the poise of a fan nor the cast of a gesture, but with things of gravity and import. The wars of man with brute, of brute with Nature, of man with brute and Nature both, such were the topics of that vivid canvas. It was a time of large actions, large pictures.

One can see it now, the great cold landscape of the cattle range in winter. It is a picture of scant lighting and low values. The monochrome of winter, the blue-gray of cold desolation, oppresses it all. The white hills set on the farther edge are cold and bluish. The sky above is forbidding with its sunless gray. The dust-grimed snow in the *coulees* is gray, and the uncovered soil of the wind-swept hill is gray and cheerless. Not a rift of light falls anywhere, not a touch of sun to soften the hard, metallic composition. All the greens were gone long ago. The ragged and clutching hand of a sagebush reaches up in despair from the uncompromising desert, but it, too, is gray—gray with the withered spirit of the iron earth and icy air. The sky is even in its colours, except that now and then there scuds across it a strange and

A Stampede.

ominous thing, a wisp of flying white, misplaced and unregulated. For the air is altogether still. No breath waves the mane of this pony which stands on the little ridge, its head up and its gaze bent fixedly upon the far horizon. There is something strange in the air. It is not so extremely cold, but the silence is so deep, so startling. Back of the very silence there is something, something of portent, of warning. Now and again a long shivering moan goes across the plain, borne from no one knows what origin. The image of dread is stalking forth this day. All animate nature feels it. Whither are going these great gray wolves, slouching along, their tails low, their heads over their shoulders, looking backward at this unseen pursuing thing? They do not trouble the cattle now, nor do the cattle fear them as they pass through. What, then, is it that the cattle dread, so that they sniff and snort and toss their heads, looking wildly toward the north as did this pony now? Written on this inscrutable dull sky there must be some awful sight invisible to human eyes. These wild creatures of the plains see it. They feel the dread. They know their weakness to meet this coming thing. They moan, the note of despair in their voices. They start now and then and run swiftly for a short distance, then turn and come back, pitching their heads high and bellowing. They lower their heads and shake them, and mutter hoarsely, with their muzzles near the ground, emitting their breath in sharp puffs.

Look! The breath of the cattle has grown white. It shines like fresh steam in the air. A moment ago the air was warm. And now that weird white scud flitted again across the sky, across the earth rather, low down, flying like some wraith of the mountains. Back there, upon the horizon where the cattle have

looked so long, there arises a tiny cloud of white, soft, fleecy, innocent as the garb of a babe. Alas! it is the shroud of the range. It is the vestment of death for thousands of these creatures here!

It comes, this little cloud, rising and growing and spreading as though it were some vast curtain drawn quickly up and forward. Before it run long, ragged hissings in the air, and on the edge of these hissings fly always these scuds of the sky, little venomous spirits of fury, as they may now plainly be seen to be. With the mutterings of the gathering cattle, which now crowd together in the blind wish for aid and comfort, there blends the first low voice of the storm, a far-off sighing wail, of cadence at first indicative of anything but malice. This voice rises and then falls and is silent for a moment. It rises again, nearer and changed in import. It dominates the mingled voices of the herd, now crowded together, their feet scuffling, their heads thrown high and confusedly. Again the storm speaks, this time very near, and as it falls a great sigh goes over the breast of Nature, the sigh for that which is to happen. It is the last warning, as useless as the others. The storm has crept on until it is sure of its prey. There is a whirring, rasping crash as the blades of the wind meet and sweep on, and then a wall of icy white smites the shivering beasts as they stand huddled and waiting for that which they know is doom!

On the narrowed horizon, leaning forward as they ride and coming to the herd as fast as their horses can bear them, are two figures, the men of the line camp nearest to this spot. If they can head the cattle into the broken country beyond perhaps they can find shelter enough to stop the drift. If they start straight down before the wind, nothing can stop them till they reach the first fences many miles below. It will be

the emptying of the range! Once under the hills before the drift begins, and perhaps there will be shelter enough to enable the cattle to live through the storm. Perhaps they, too, can live through it in some way; they have not paused to ponder how. Well enough they know that anything they do must be done at once. Well enough they know, perhaps, that every human regard for their own safety would take them just the other way, back to the little dugout in the bank which they have left. But at least they will try to save a part of the herd which has formed here. They must be young men. Old hands would know that when the blizzard has set in there is no power on earth that can stop the drifting of the cattle.

And now the storm bursts with a blinding, smothering wave of white, fine snow, driven to atoms by the flat wind that hurls it on. This *poudre* of the north cuts like a set of knives revolving on the skin. No man, no creature can face it. The stings of the thousands of whips smite unceasingly, all this under the exhaust of the storm, which steals away the breath so that one must turn down wind to live. The air has grown icy cold at once. All around the world is now blotted out. The eye strikes a continuous dancing, glittering whirl of particles of ice, which confuse and bewilder with their incessant glinting flight. All sense of direction is lost at once. There is but one direction, and that is with the wind. The ground itself is almost gone. The mountains, the hills, the ridges, the *coulees* have all disappeared. Only close at the feet of the horses and cattle can one see a bit of earth, this veiled by the suffusing white breath of the animals, turned into vapour on the instant that it strikes the arctic air.

At first the cattle turn their backs to the wind,

and so stand huddled and motionless, the little calves pressing deep into the mass of the shivering creatures and bleating piteously. In a few moments the whole herd is covered with a blanket of white. The two men who are now up with the herd strive to break apart this blanket of white, riding along the edges with bent heads, seeking to open out the cattle so that they can get them moving. It is useless! The white veil shuts down too sternly. The men can no longer breathe. Their eyes are blinded by the stinging riffs of fine ice. They are separated in the storm. A shout is answered by a shout, but though the one ride toward the other as best he may he can not find him now, for ever the voice calling seems to shift and evade as though the spirits used it mockingly. Crack! crack! comes the note of the six-shooter, but how small, how far away it is! Again and again, and again also the answer! These two men have not lost their heart. They will yet find each other. They will turn the herd, they two alone, here on the wide, white plain, in this mystery of moving white! But where was the last shot? It sounded half a mile away. It might have been a hundred yards.

There comes a mightier wail of the wind, a more vindictive rush of the powdery snow. All trace of the landscape is now absolutely gone. The cowboy has wheeled his horse, but he knows not now which way he heads. The hills may be this way or that. A strange, numb, confused mental condition comes to him. He crouches down in the saddle, his head drooping, as he raises his arm yet again and fires another shot, almost his last. He dreams he hears an answer, and he calls again hoarsely. The scream of the wind and the rumbling of the voices of the cattle drown out all other sounds. He is in with the herd. His

partner is in with it too. But neither he nor they both will ever turn or direct this herd. This he knows with sinking heart. They are lost, all lost together, out here upon the pitiless plains. And there are firesides of which these men may think!

The herd moves! It recks not human guidance now, for the storm alone is its final guide and master. The storm orders it to move, and it obeys. With low moans and groanings of suffering and of fear there ensues a waving movement of the long blanket of white which has enshrouded the close-packed mass of cattle. They stagger and stop, doubting and dreading. They go on again and stop, and again they sway and swing forward, the horns rattling close upon each other, the heads drooping, the gait one of misery and despair. The drift has begun!

Lost in the drift are the two boys, and they know they may as well follow as stop. Indeed, they dare not stop, for to stop is to die. Down from their horses they go and battle on foot among the dull-eyed cattle. Over their hearts creeps always that heavy, wondering, helpless feeling. They freeze, but soon cease to know they freeze. Their stiff legs stumble, and they wonder why. Their mouths are shut fast by the ice. The eyes of the cattle are frozen over entirely by the ice that gathers on their eyelids, and their hair, long and staring, shows in frosty filaments about their heads and necks. Icicles hang upon their jaws. They moan and sigh, now and then a deep rumbling bellow coming from the herd. The cows low sadly. The little calves bawl piteously. But on and on goes the drift, all keeping together for a time. And with it somewhere are the two cowboys, who should have known the import of the blizzard on the plains.

This horrible icy air can not long be endured by

any living being, and soon the herd begins to string out into a long line, the weaker ones falling to the rear. If the cattle be strong and well-fed, they can endure any cold, but starvation has here been long at work. The horrible and inexorable law of Nature is going on. The strongest alone may survive. Those which fall back do not at first stop. They stagger on as far as they can. A little calf falls down, sinking first to its knees, and then dropping stiffly, its head still down the wind. Its mother stays with it, pushing at it with her own frozen muzzle. It can not get to its feet. The mother looks after the indistinct forms slowly disappearing in the driving mist of white, but goes no farther on. In the spring they will find the mother and calf together. Farther to the south are the bunches of yearlings which were weak and thin of flesh. Then come the heifers and cows and steers as they fell out and back in order in this white cold mist of the great drift that cleared the range from the foothills to the railroad fences. In places the followers of the drift may find gullies or deep ravines packed with carcasses of animals which here met their death. When the wind had swept the *coulees* full of snow the treacherous white surface looked all alike to the dull eyes of the drifting cattle. They walked into the yielding snow and fell one above the other in a horrible confusion, those above trampling to death those beneath until all was mingled in a smother and crush of passing life. Again there may be noted a spot where, under the lee of some cut bank or bluff, the cattle paused for shelter from the storm. Here the snow piled up about them, drifting high around into an icy barricade, until they had left but a tiny feeding ground, swept bare by the eddying winds. Here, hemmed in and soon without food, they stood and

starved by inches, perhaps living for days or weeks before the end came. Here, had rescue been attempted, they would have charged furiously, with such strength as they had left, any human being daring to come near, for the greater the strait of the range animal the greater the unreasoning rage with which it resists all effort at its succour.

All day and all night and into the next day, perhaps, the cattle drift, their numbers less and less with each passing hour, leaving behind a trail of shapeless heaps, thick and thicker as the long hours drag by, the numbers of the survivors growing still fewer and fewer, weaker and more weak. Out of the whole herd which started there are but a few hundreds or thousands which come to the fences of the railroad, seventy miles from where the drift began. Here it ends—ends in a row of heaped-up carcasses along the wires that held the remnants of the herd from further travel; ends as you may see as you gaze from the car window in the spring as you are whirled across the great plains—ends in a blanket of hide a hundred miles in length. The skinning parties which follow the drift when the weather has grown warmer use the wire fences as their drying racks.

And of the men who were caught in the storm? One they found in a *coulee* back toward the beginning of the drift, where he crawled under a little ledge and thought he could weather out the storm. He had no fire nor fuel nor light of any kind, and neither had he any food. He cared nothing for these things. He felt cheerful, and he fell asleep, dreaming. The other man went much farther before he lay down. Then, resourceful to the last, he shot and killed a steer in a little hollow where the wind was least. They found him crouched up close to the body of the ani-

mal, his arm between its fore legs and partly about its neck, his face hid in the hair of the creature's chest. But the blood of both had turned to ice before they fell.

In the spring the sky is blue and repentant, and the wind sings softly in the prairie grasses. But one can not forget that awful picture of the blue-gray time, and ever he hears the death songs of the legions of the air which urged on the herds in their solemn march into annihilation. Such is one picture of the range.

There is another picture of a strenuous sort. This time it is summer, and it is at night. At evening, when the great herd of trail cattle bedded down on the hillside, the sky was clear and the stars were shining luminously large in the pure air of the plains. It needed an old plainsman to know what this foreboding quiet meant, this ominous hush, and he alone would have noted anxiously the dark line of cloud along the horizon. Any of these hardy riders could tell you a storm was breeding, but they have seen many storms and do not fear them. The cook whistles as steadily and discordantly as ever as he washes his dishes in the dusk, swearing fluently when a stray whisk of air blows the ashes out of his fire pit into his eyes. The cook pulls the wagon sheet tight to-night, however, and he makes his own bed inside the wagon. The night herder turns up his collar as he goes on watch with the horse herd. The drive boss sits with his knees between his hands smoking a pipe, which glows dully in the darkening night. The camp is quiet. All about come up the faint night sounds of the plains. The men are tired, and one by one they unroll their blankets and lie out in huge cocoons, each with his head in the hollow of his saddle and his hat pulled down over his face. Jim, the foreman of the drive,

does not go to sleep just yet. He sits smoking and watching. Now and then a wandering whiff of wind blows the ashes in a fiery little stream out of his pipe bowl. Jim puts an extra man on the night watch, who departs into the dark, singing softly to himself.

Jim sits thus for some time with his knees up between his hands, perhaps nodding now and then, but afraid to go to sleep. He notes the steady play of the lightning on the rising bank of clouds, and before an hour has passed he begins to hear the low, incessant muttering of the thunder. In half an hour more he is going down the line, kicking the long cocoons with the toe of his boot and calling out:

"Tumble out, fellers! Git up! There's goin' to be a hell of a storm."

With grunts of protest the cowpunchers roll out of their blankets and sit up in the night, rubbing their eyes. They see the bank of cloud now reaching over them, and hear the steady roar of the thunder approaching. The wind begins to sob in the grass, and little particles of dust go whirling by. The head of the cook pokes itself out from the wagon.

"What in hell!" says the cook.

"She's goin' to be hell all right, cookie," says a voice cheerfully. "You better picket your dough-pan."

"I would not live al-l-lwa-y," comes the faint voice of the night herder as he makes his rounds.

"Saddle up, fellers!" says Jim. "There's shore goin' to be hell a-poppin' here before long. If they ever break out of here they'll run to hell an' gone with us to-night."

"That's right, pitch, you wall-eyed son of misery!" says an injured voice in the dark, from where some cowpuncher is having an argument with his pony,

which resents the saddle thrown across its back in the dark.

"Oh, then, Susannah, don't yer cry fer me!" sings another voice, as the owner of it, wrapped in his yellow slicker, gets into his saddle and turns toward the herd.

"Good-bye, cookie!" calls another. "You can git breakfast fer us on the Cimarron, I reckon."

They all take up their round about the herd, falling into their work with the philosophy of their calling, which accepts things as they come. As they ride in line along the edge of the herd the thunder is booming loudly, and the rain begins to fall in heavy, irregular drops. Then suddenly with a gusty rush the torrents of the air break loose, and a solid wall of rain sweeps over the place, hiding in a whirling mist the outlines of men and animals. The thunder now bursts with deafening volume. The cattle have sprung to their feet and now push about among themselves uneasily, their long horns clanking together in the darkness. They are wet, but the rain is not chilling, and in a moment the cloud-burst is over and gone, and nothing remains of the storm but the lightning and the wind. The sky lightens queerly, so that objects may be faintly seen, men riding along the edge of the herd, keeping the cattle back and closing them up. Sounds of confused sort come from among the cattle, grumblings and mutterings, mingling with the chanting of the cowboys riding. The storm is nearly past, but the whole air is alive with electricity. The discharge of the thunder is as the noise of cannon. The lightning falls not in jagged lines, but in bursting balls of flame, which detonate with terrible reports. Along the tips of the horns of the cattle the faint flames play in weird way, as the fires of St. Elmo upon

the spars of a ship caught in a storm at sea. The men still hold the line, calling to the cattle, which are now clattering and shuffling about in a way not pleasant to hear, though still they do not break into any concerted rush. Now and again a start is made by some frightened animal, but the nearest cowboy turns it back, riding against the head of each break showing toward the edge. The herd is shifting ground a little, edging a trifle down wind. This brings it nearer to the camping place, nearer also to the wagon of the cook, which stands with its white cover broken loose and flapping upon the gale. There is a call of a voice, which begins to shout out something.

But this voice, and all the voices, and all the other sounds are swallowed in a mighty, dreadful roar. The white cover of the wagon has broken loose at the other end, the rope parting with a crack like the report of a gun. The wagon sheet whips madly up and down as though with deliberate intent of malice, and then goes sailing off across the prairie. No studied effort of evil could have been direr at this very moment! The herd, keyed up to the last pitch of nervousness and only held by the utmost efforts of the cowboys, needs only this devil's device to set it off. "Good God A'mighty!" bursts out the foreman. But even as he shouts he, in common with every other man of the outfit, digs in his spurs and rides for the head of the herd, the front of this plunging, rushing, stumbling, falling mass of panic-stricken creatures which are off in the curse of the drive—the dreaded stampede in the dark!

The sound of the rushing hoofs of near ten thousand cattle is imposing enough at any time, but heard mingled and confused in the running in the dark it is something terrible. A loud cracking of hoofs comes

through the fog of sound, and the mad rattling of the great horns swung together in the crush as the cattle struggle to head out of the suffocating press behind them and on all sides. Mad indeed is this chase to-night, and far will be its ending, this ride with the accompaniment of the booming thunder and with the ripping flight of the lightning for its only beacon. Ride, Jim! Ride, Springtime, and Tex., and Curley, and Kid, and Cherokee, and all the rest of you! Now if ever you must be men of proof! Into the rattle of it, up to the head of it, press, spur, crowd! Shoot into their faces, frighten them back, turn them aside, ride into them, over them, but ride fast and thoughtless of yourself! There is no possibility of taking care. The pony must do it all. The pony knows what a stumble means. The herd will roll over horse and man and crush them as if they were but prairie flowers. The ground is rough, but there must be no blunder. Ah, but there was! Something happened there! There was a stumble! There was a cry, smothered; but all that was half a mile back. The herd sweeps on.

Into the thick of the leaders of the herd the cowpunchers crowd in from the flanks, meeting there the men who were swept away in the first mad rush of the cattle. They can not now escape from this position, nor do they seek to do so, but ride with the stampede, their horses with ears flat, struggling on at top speed, bounding from side to side to escape the jostling of a steer, leaping ahead when the press clears in front for a moment. Through the noise of the pounding hoofs comes the panting of the cattle and the sobbing but valiant breath of the brave little horses which carry these wild and reckless men. A faint shout is heard at times or the "Whoa-o-o-ope!" of a voice call-

ing to the cattle in attempt at soothing them. Now and then may be seen an arm thrown up and waved in gesture to a near-by rider, or at times may shoot forth the flash of the revolver as some daring man heads across the front and tries to frighten the herd into swinging from its course.

The thundering hoofs now seem to pound upon harder ground. The broken country near the bluffs of the river is at hand. Down into gully and ravine go men and horses and cattle in the dark, and welter out of it upon the other side as best they may. Many an animal goes headlong in the dark, but it is not noticed or deplored. Each object makes a tiny rock to stem the flood of pouring cattle. But suddenly, without warning, the whole front of the herd plunges down utterly out of view! It has dropped down into the earth, has been swallowed up bodily! Some of the cowpunchers went down too. At the brink of the bluff the following numbers of the cattle pile up and back in a horrid mass, seeking to crowd back, but yet pushed on by the herd behind. The remnant of the herd splits, and turns along the side of the bluff. The remaining cowboys follow, pressing and crowding in, still spurring up to the heads of the panting cattle and seeking to turn them. The head of the herd finally swerves, it turns gradually more and more. The cowboys are still in front, shouting, crowding, firing their revolvers across the faces of the cattle, and urging them back and away from the bluffs. The cattle turn now and traverse a circle. A moment later and they round the same circle, their ranks now closer together. The circle grows smaller and smaller. The mill is begun. Round and round they go until they no longer seek to break away, but stand and clatter and shuffle and pant. Round and round the mill the

cowboys ride, talking to the cattle now in proficient profanity, but doing nothing to startle the terrorized animals into a further flight. Gradually the panic passes. At length the cowpuncher takes a chew of tobacco and pulls up his pony even from the walk in which he has been going about the herd.

The men who were at the head of the herd at the place where it went over the cut bank had no warning and no alternative. The ponies leaped with the cattle, and all took their chances together at the foot of the bank, a dozen feet in height. But here the ground was soft, and it was but a few steps to the water. In a moment the river was full of struggling, frantic creatures, all swimming for their lives, and all acting blindly except the cowpunchers, who retained their grim energy and had no thought of giving up their lives. These swam clear of the crush of cattle and dropped down to a bar below. Scattered animals came drifting down stream and took the shore as they had done. Many dead cattle floated past the bar, and at the foot of the bank a heap of dead and crippled ones lay tangled. Not till morning, of course, could the task of roping and pulling out the cattle from the water and from under the banks begin. These cowpunchers as well as they were able rode back to the path of the "split," and so found the main mill and joined their companions.

"I shore thought I was a angel when we took the bank," says Curley, wiping his face with his wet neckerchief.

"Where's the Kid?" asks Jim gruffly.

"Dunno," is the answer. "I ain't seen him nowheres near me."

It is hard to tell where any one may be at this time, past midnight, with the storm just muttering itself

away. Some of the cattle may be running yet, and some of the cowboys may be with them. It may be twenty miles away that the last cowpuncher will pull up. The cattle will be scattered over miles and miles of country, and it will take days to get them together, less the losses which are sure to ensue upon the stampede. Nothing remains to be done now by those who are assembled but to hold their remnant of the herd till morning. And morning finds the men still holding the herd, their eyes now heavy and red, their faces haggard, their clothing covered with the mud of the mad ride in the night. A detail is made to keep watch here, while the rest of the men go back to camp to bring on the cook wagon and pick up the frayed ends of the rout. As these men ride in they see occasional scattered groups of cattle, which are turned back toward the main body. No one says much, for all are tired. As they pass on toward camp, or rather toward where camp was, a draggled figure rides up from out a little gully—one of the boys who has followed off a bunch of cattle by himself, and so been widely separated from the others.

"Hello, Cherokee!" says Jim. "Where's the Kid? We can't none of us find him nowhere."

"I ain't seen him neither," says Cherokee. "There ain't nobody at all been with me."

But as they ride on along the torn and trampled trail left by the cattle in their flight of the night before, they all see the Kid—see him, every one of them, before any one of them dares to say a word. They know what is this dark mass lying on the ground on ahead. Something strange chokes every throat, and each man adds an oath to the heap of pity as they draw up by the body. The boy's face, washed white and clean by the drenching rain which has taken away

the grime of the ride, lies upturned in the morning sunlight, which kisses it gently. His hair, sodden with the flood, trails off into the miry earth, of which he was a part, and into which he is now to return. His pony, with its fore legs broken, lifts its head as high as it can and whinnies.

"Kill the horse, Bud!" says Jim at last, as they stand about the straightened figure of the boy. A shot is given the pony, and the saddle stripped from its back. Jim mounts his horse, and reaches down to the burden which Springtime hands up to him from the ground. He takes the dead boy in his arms, riding with his reins loose over the horn of his saddle and holding up his burden carefully across his lap. He says nothing till he gets near camp, muttering then only, "It's too d—d bad!"

When they get to camp the cook has breakfast ready, such as it is. The flour and sugar and everything else is wetted to the point of dissolution by the rain. More talkative than his fellows of the saddle, the cook breaks into loud exclamations of lamentation when he sees what is this strange burden the foreman is carrying.

"Shut up, d—n you!" says Jim to the cook. He knows that it was not the fault of the cook that all this trouble occurred, but he feels that he has to blame somebody for something, in order to relieve his own overburdened heart. "It's yore own fault," he says to the cook, "lettin' that wagon cover blow off. You do it again, an', d—n you, I'll kill you!"

It is primitive, crude, and hard enough, this little group here on the muddy plains this morning. For them there is not a voice of comfort, not a sign of help, not a token of hope. The tired, worn faces show hard and grim in the unflattering light of morning as they

stand about, some holding the bridles of their horses, some leaning against the wagon or sitting on the wagon tongue. There is no house nor home here nor anywhere near here. It is a hundred miles to a ranch, two hundred to a town. There is no church nor minister. Not one hypocrite is to be found in this knot of rude men, and as none has professed any religion before, so none does so now. Jim, who is the leader, straightens out the boy's limbs as he lays him upon the ground and spreads a blanket over him.

"Git breakfast over!" he says grimly. And after breakfast the shovel of the cook which dug the trench for the fire digs the grave for the boy. There is no funeral service. He is buried in his blankets, with his hat over his face and his boots and spurs in place, as he slept when he was alive. A soldier of the plains, he dared the risks of his calling, and met them like a man. Such is another picture of the plains.

CHAPTER XI.

A DAY AT THE RANCH.

During days, or perhaps weeks, of the busy season, when most of the men are absent on the round-ups, the door of the home ranch may be closed. It may be closed, but it is not locked, for on the frontier locks and bars are unknown. The necessities of a country make its customs, and in the remote parts of the plains and mountains hospitality is practically a necessity. The traveller is perhaps far from home, and is hungry or athirst when he falls upon the cabin of some man to whom he is a stranger. When that occurs the stranger goes into the unlocked house, helps himself to the bacon and flour, cooks his meal, and departs as he came. In time he may repay the courtesy himself at his own cabin and perhaps in the same way. There was a touch of feudal largeness and liberality in some of the customs of the earlier cattle days, and the fact that they were necessary rendered them none the less beautiful. Perhaps the state of the social relations among the cattle men of the early range was approached most closely by the life of the great Southern plantations in *ante bellum* days, from which, indeed, it may in part have had its origin. The ways of the South always flavoured the life of the cattle country, whether in Texas or Wyoming, far more than the ways of the North and East. Perhaps

the zest which many Eastern men found in ranch life was the zest of novelty, and this a novelty to be measured by degrees of latitude and not of longitude. We must credit the South with the origin and establishment of the cattle trade, and with many of its most interesting, its broadest, and most beautiful features. The more exact methods, the better system, the perfection of detail, and utilization of things once neglected came from the North, and came, alas! with a shock fatal to some of the customs of the good old days. In the past the lock of the ranch door was nothing but a rude wooden latch, as easily opened from without as from within. To-day there may be iron padlocks upon some of the doors of the houses on the range.

There is no lock upon the door of our ranch house, whether it be empty or occupied. Such as it is, it constitutes the only home the cowboy has. Hither he returns from the more active duties of the round-up or the drive, and takes up the less exacting routine of everyday ranch life. Of work proper, as a farm labourer would consider it, the cowboy has little real conception. He is a horseman and nothing more, and has little inclination for any work that can not be done in the saddle. Thus, if he feels obliged to go out for wood, he goes out on horseback, and his idea of the correct way to get a log of wood to camp is to drag it at the end of his lariat. If a wagon is mired down in the quicksands of a soft crossing, the cowboy who comes to the aid of the driver does not dismount and get himself muddy in the labour of getting the wagon out, but makes fast his rope to some holding place on the wagon and trusts to his saddle girths for the rest, knowing that his plucky little pony will in this way pull a considerable load, though it would

break its neck in rebellion if hitched up to the wagon. The cowboy has a mild contempt for all walking and driving men. In his own line of work he can be a miracle of tireless energy. Out of that line he is a prodigy of more or less good-natured laziness.

We may suppose, then, that a day of ordinary ranch life is not one of great activity or haste. The chores which the cowpuncher considers within his province are very few and simple. If in the winter some horses are kept up under feed in the ranch stables, he may feed his own horse, but no other man's. In the later days of ranch life the cowboy has come to be more of a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, more interested in the haying operations and other portions of the ranch economy, but primarily and properly the genuine cowpuncher had to do, as he understood it, only with cows, which were to be handled by himself only while he was in the saddle. It was the chief concern of the rancher in the early days to see that his cattle had a fair show in the struggle with Nature. Efforts toward ameliorating the conditions of the animals were very crude and little considered. Food and shelter were things which the cattle were supposed to find for themselves. The ranch proper has none of the grinding detail of the farm, and the cowboy proper is as different from the farm labourer as a wild hawk from a domestic fowl.

The day at the ranch begins early, for by daybreak the men have slept enough. There is little to induce them to sit up late at night. Sometimes a trapper or wolfer stops at the ranch, and there may be spirited games inaugurated over the well-worn and greasy pack of cards, the currency being what money the cowpunchers may have, together with due bills against their coming pay day, these perhaps staked against

strings of coyote feet and wolf scalps which are good for so much bounty at the county seat. Of reading the cowpuncher does but little, and his facilities for obtaining literature are very limited. The periodicals reaching the cow camp are apt to be of the sensational, pink-tinted sort, with crude pictures and lurid letter-text. His books are too often of much the same type, though at some of the ranches there may be some few works of fiction of a better sort. Whatever the books at the ranch may be, from society novel to farrier's guide, the cowpuncher reads them all over and over again until he is tired of seeing them. Not having much more to do of an evening, he goes to bed. It is supposed by some misguided souls that when the so-called wild cowboys of a ranch have met at night after the close of their exciting duties the scene at the ranch house is one of rude hilarity and confusion. Really quite the opposite of this is true. The interior of a ranch house of an evening offers rather a quiet and orderly appearance. Liquor is something rarely seen there, because it comes very rarely, and does not last long when it comes. As a rule, the cowpuncher is rather a silent man, though not so silent as the melancholy sheep herder, who rarely endures the terrible monotony of his calling for more than seven years without becoming insane. A cowboy who is very "mouthy" is not usually in high repute at a cow camp, and one disposed to personal brilliance or sarcastic comment on the peculiarities of his fellow-men is apt to meet with swift and effectual discouragement. Rude and unlettered though he be, and treating his companions with a rough and ready familiarity, the cowpuncher yet accords to his neighbour the right to live the life and go the gait which seems most pleasing to himself. One does not intrude upon the rights of

others in the cow country, and he looks to it very promptly that no one shall intrude upon his. In the cow towns or at the cow camps one never hears the abusiveness or rude speech common in the older settlements. On the range, especially in the earlier days, if a man applied to another an epithet which in the States would be taken as something to be endured or returned in kind, the result would have been the essential and immediate preparations for a funeral.

In all countries where the home is unknown and the society is made up of males altogether, the men grow very morose and surly, and all the natural ugliness of their dispositions comes out. They are more apt to magnify small slights and slips, and more apt to get into trouble over small matters of personal honour. Upon the other hand, the best possible correction for this tendency is the acknowledged fact that it is not personally safe to go into a quarrel. It was never safe to quarrel on the cow range.

The cook, of course, is the first one up about the camp, and he "makes the breakfast" in his own room. The toilet of the cowpuncher is simple, and, after he has kicked off his blankets, it is but a few moments before he is at the table eating his plateful of beef or bacon and beans. The meal does not last long, and those which follow it later in the day are much the same. The city club man is fond of wild game as an adjunct to a good dinner. The "granger" sets oysters and ice cream as the highest possible luxuries of life. The cowboy thinks of fresh green vegetables in his epicurean dreams, and he longs for the indigestible pie of civilization. Any pure cowpuncher would sell his birthright for half a dozen pies. The cow cook can not make actual pies, only leathery imitations encasing stewed dried apples. One remembers very well a cer-

tain Christmas dinner in a little far-away Western plains town which cost two men twenty-five dollars, and which consisted of some badly cooked beef, one can of oysters, a frosted cake, and five green onions, the latter obtained from somewhere by a hothouse miracle. This dinner was voted a very extraordinary and successful affair. The men at the ranch house are not averse to an occasional change in their diet, and fresh game is appreciated. Deer, antelope, wild turkey, and sometimes smaller game often appeared on the *menu* of the ranch in the old days, but big game is scarce now over most of the range, and small game has rarely had much attention from the cowboys, who, as a rule, do not at best do a great deal of hunting.

After breakfast, if this be in the winter season and in a cold Northern country, the first work is attending to the riding horses kept in the stables, which are in such a country a necessity. Behind each horse in the stable is a long wooden peg, upon which hang the bridle and saddle. Each man has his own place reserved, and resents any intrusion upon his rights as to saddle, bridle, and rope. One man may use freely the tobacco or whisky of a fellow-cowpuncher, but he may not touch his rope, quirt, or other parts of his riding outfit. Of course, one man will not want to use another's saddle. "I wouldn't ride a mile in that thing o' yourn fer the best heifer that runs the range," says the cowpuncher, referring contemptuously to the prized saddle of another. "I'd plum have a misery if I had to ride yourn," is the reply.

Part or all of the horse herd will not be kept up at the ranch house, but will be watched, so that their whereabouts will be known. A man may be sent out in the morning to bring in the horse herd, and then ensues one of the most picturesque events of the day.

The bunch of horses comes up on a gallop, urged by the cowpuncher behind them. All sorts of horses are in the collection, all of them rough of coat and hard of form, and not one of them has a pleasant expression of countenance as he turns into the ranch corral, with his ears drooping and his eye rolling about in search of trouble. Inside the corral each horse runs about and dodges behind his fellows when he fancies himself wanted, doing his best to escape till he actually feels the circle of the rope, when he falls into meek but mutinous quiet. The cowpuncher leads him out, and throws on his back the heavy saddle, the pony meanwhile standing the picture of forlornness and despair, apparently upon his very last legs and quite unfit for travel. To his airs and attitudes the cowpuncher gives no attention, but proceeds to cinch up the saddle. As he begins this the pony heaves a deep, long breath, which converts him temporarily into something of the figure of a balloon. The cowpuncher knows what this means, and, putting his foot against the side of the pony, he gives a quick, strong pull on the girth, which causes the pony to grunt in a grieved way and to lessen his size abruptly. The hind cinch is not drawn tight, for in regard to that a cow horse feels that it has certain rights to breathing room which even a cowpuncher is bound to respect. In any case, the pony may pitch a little when the cowboy swings into the saddle, especially if it has not been ridden for some time. It may do this because it is happy or because it is not happy, but the cowpuncher does not pay much attention to it unless it be very violent, in which case he may join the yells of his companions as the pony goes thumping stiff-legged over a dozen yards or so before it settles down.

The conventional picture of a cowboy shows him

going at a sweeping gallop over the plains, his hair flying wildly and his horse *ventre a terre*, its eyes bulging out in the exultation of speed. Sometimes the cowboy rides hard on the round-up or when he comes to town, but when he sets out across the range on his day's work at the ranch he does not spur and gallop his horse. He goes at a steady, ceaseless, choppy little trot, which it tires the life out of a tenderfoot to follow all day. This short trot is a natural gait for the cow pony, and it will maintain it for a long time if not crowded too hard. These little horses make very enduring driving horses when broken to that work, and a team of them has been known to pull a light wagon eighty miles in a day's drive—a feat which would be impossible upon Eastern roads and in the Eastern atmosphere.

As Jim, our cowpuncher, rides along on his day's work, quite alone, of course, he sees many things which the tenderfoot would not notice. He notes where a deer has crossed the ranch road, where the wolves have been playing in the sand, where the "bob cat" has walked along the muddy bank. He sees the track of the horse which crossed, and can tell whether or not it is a fresh track. Perhaps it is part of his day's work to look up some of the ranch horses which have strayed away. Perhaps his ranch is under fence, and if so he must ride the line to see that the fence is not down at any point. In the early days no man needed to worry about fences, but of later times the faithful cowboy who works on a fenced ranch is sometimes called contemptuously a "pliers man" by the rustlers" who have no fences of their own, this name coming from the tools which the cowboy carries in order to mend a break if he finds one in the wire fence. The cowpuncher's eye, from force of habit, is keen to

note any unbranded animal that may be running on his range. If the law or his conscience in regard to Mavericks permit it—and as to Mavericks the conscience of all good cowpunchers is wide—our solitary rider may forthwith set about correcting the deficiency in the unbranded calf running with or without the company of the cow. It is not unknown that a cowpuncher has built a fire, heated his iron, taken his place again in the saddle, roped and thrown his calf, and then dragged it up to him as he sat in the saddle, finishing the branding without dismounting. This, however, is the act of a stylist in cowpunching.

The range in summer time is a breezy and not unpleasant place to be, in spite of the brilliant sun. The cowpuncher has the equanimity of good digestion and well-oxygenated blood as he goes on his morning ride across the country. Always his eye roams over the expanse ahead. He can tell farther than the tenderfoot can see what is going on out on the horizon. He knows what is this distant horseman crossing the flat ahead. If it is a cowboy, he knows him because he rides straight up in his stirrups, with no crooking-back of the leg. If it is an Indian, he will be sitting hunched up, with his stirrups very short and his leg bent back under the horse's belly, riding with the calf of his leg rather than with the thigh or knee, and, moreover, kicking his horse all the time. If Jim, the cowboy, does not think this horseman should be there at this part of the range, he may stop and unsling the big field glasses which he sometimes carries with him as an aid in his work. With these glasses he swings his gaze across the whole sweep of country steadily, seeing a strange panorama, not all of which would be visible if he waited to ride up close enough to see with the unaided eye. He sees a little bunch of young cows

running up out of a draw, and suspects that the gray wolves may have pulled down a calf there. He sees the coyotes, reddish in the warm sun, sneaking off across the plain. He notes the low swoop of a big eagle, and he watches a long time the actions of a bunch of antelope. A little cloud of dust arising steadily from one spot attracts his attention, and, looking for a long time at this, he sees it is caused by two big bulls which are waging one of the stubborn and exciting combats of the cattle plains. Interested in this, he closes the glasses and rides over to "see the fun"; for a fight of any kind is not foreign to his preferences. He draws up by the side of the intent fighters, not close enough to disturb them, and, taking a chew of tobacco, throws his leg over the horn of his saddle as he sits, offering mental wagers on the winner. The two great animals charge and charge again, their solid foreheads meeting with dull thumps, their backs bowing up strongly, their muscles cording out in relief as they thrust and shove, each trying to get at the side of the other, their hind legs going fairly up on their toes as they clash in the encounter. The herd stands near by, watching the contest with eager interest, the heads of the cows thrown high, occasionally an animal running away a bit in fright, only to return to the fascination of the spectacle. The eyes of the fighting bulls glare, and foam hangs from their mouths. They pant and grumble, their sides momentarily growing more densely covered with the white dust. Thus they fight till at length one tires and can no longer withstand the steady shove of his antagonist. He weakens, turns swiftly to one side, swerving cunningly clear of the rapid thrust at his side which follows, and runs off discomfited, the other retiring pawing, shaking his head, and bellowing. This

will give the cowpuncher something to talk about to-night.

As he rides on over the range, the cowpuncher keeps out an eye along the watering places to note any animal that may have become mired down. When he sees a big steer thus entrapped, and with life enough left in it to warrant an attempt at its rescue, Jim rides up to the edge of the boggy place and sets about pulling out the animal. He does not like to get his rope muddy for the sake of a Texas steer, but still he may do so upon occasion. With a sweep of the wrist he lands the rope about the horns of the creature, the latter meantime snorting and shaking its head in resentment, and having no understanding of the intention of it all. Heading the pony up the bank, Jim sets in the spurs, and the sturdy little horse, which takes as much delight as its master in showing its superiority over all horned things, stiffens its muscles and strains at the rope. If the steer's neck holds together, it comes out of the mud. Then, if it has not been bogged down for very long, and still has most of its quota of original sin, the steer is extremely apt to reward its rescuers with a sudden and determined charge as quickly as it gets on its feet, for it knows nothing about the service that has been rendered, and feels only that its dignity has been injured by these creatures which it hates. But the charge is not rapid enough to catch the swift-footed little pony.

Perhaps Jim notes in his rounds a steer that is standing apart by itself, with its head down, dull and stupid. Or perhaps it will so stand for a time, and then run about frantic and crazy, as though intoxicated. Jim knows what is the cause of this. The animal has been eating the "loco weed," against which instinct gives it apparently no protection. The effect

of this herb is to stupefy or render crazed the animal eating of it. From the Spanish word *loco*—"mad, crazy"—comes the expression common on the range, "locoed." To say that a man is "locoed" means that he is foolish, absurd, crazy. If Jim sees too much loco weed about, he may drive the cattle away from that part of the range.

Jim does not love a rattlesnake, nor does his pony, and the latter can smell one a long way, turning its head to where it lies curled up under the shade of the Spanish bayonet. Jim takes a shot or so at the snake with his six-shooter, not heeding the objections of the pony to the gun. A cow horse has to get used to a great many strange things that go on upon its back. Or Jim may dismount and kill the snake with his quirt, rather a short-range weapon for such a case, though this does not seem to trouble him. He may skin the snake if it be a very large one, turning the skin back from the neck, and pulling it free as he holds the head down with his foot. Snake fat is good for softening leather, and so is the fat of the prairie dog, at which Jim occasionally tries a shot, just to "keep his hand in."

Thus on the cowpuncher rides in the course of his day's work, across wide flats and around high, red buttes, over rough gullies and *coulees* ("*arroyos*" these would be called in the Southwest), and all the time he is observant of all that transpires about him, near at hand or at a distance. Perhaps he takes a straight course across country, on his way out to one of the "line camps" of the ranch, to see how matters are progressing there. He may take out a letter to one of the boys at that camp, a letter which has perhaps lain at the nearest post office for a month before the ranch wagon went to town, and which has been at

the ranch a couple of weeks or more in addition, but which none the less seems fresh to the cowboy receiving it. It may be from his "girl," as he calls it (his "*dulce*," it would be in the South), and if so Jim will not take the answer back with him, even though he stay overnight at the line camp, for the composition of the cowpuncher's reply is perhaps a portentous thing, to be accomplished only after long and studious effort.

As Jim turns back in his course, and rides toward the home ranch again, if it be among his plans to return to the ranch the same day, he may be a trifle hungry, but he does not mind that. It may perhaps rain, and make the going bad over the soft flats, but he does not mind that either. It is a part of his daily training to be calm and philosophical. If he be thirsty, he dismounts at the first water hole and drinks, fearless of the alkali which would nearly kill a tenderfoot, but which does not trouble him any more than it does the hardiest steer. He is fitted to survive in these hard surroundings. He belongs in this landscape of butte and plain and scarp and valley, this rugged, hard-faced man who so confidently holds on his way, from his narrowed eyes seeing all the wide sweep of the earth and air about him.

Perhaps it is night by the time he gets back to the ranch house, coming in after a wide circle in a direction opposite to that in which he went out. Perhaps he does not get back to camp at all that night, even though he wishes to do so, for even the cowpuncher can go astray in the labyrinth of the wilderness. One occasion comes to mind in which an able cowboy lost his way in a big Texas "pasture," all of which was under fence. He had, almost unbelievable

thing, gone out on foot into the *chaparral* to get his horse, which led him a chase into the heart of the dense thicket, where the blended cover stood higher than his head, matted and almost impenetrable. In spite of the fact that he knew the country perfectly, he got lost and wandered directly away from the ranch house, and spent three days in the *chaparral*, all the time, it seems, getting farther and farther away from home. He had water but once in that time, and was in a desperate plight. At last he met a bunch of horses, and noticed that one had a bit of rope about its neck, and which he therefore thought might prove gentle. His belief was correct, and he was able to go up to this horse and catch it. Mounting it bare-back, he urged it on and gave it its head, and soon the horse took him to a road, which later led him to a town at the edge of the "pasture," thirty miles from the ranch house.

Perhaps on some of his daily rides about the range Jim spies one or more cows with calves which have escaped the round-up, and to which the attention of the branding iron should be given. If he does not have any branding iron with him, which is very likely the case, and if the calves are anywhere near the home ranch, he rounds them up and drives them in ahead of him, perhaps having four or five in his herd by the time he gets to the house. These he turns into the big ranch corral, and soon a miniature branding bee is going on. The fire is built near the mouth of the corral, and Jim rides into the corral to get the calves. He knows far too much to go in on foot, for a range cow will often charge a footman, not recognising man in that segregated form, and taking him to be some enemy less redoubtable. The cows and calves run around the limit of the corral, Jim leisurely follow-

ing, his rope trailing out in the dust behind him. Jim has just eaten his dinner, and is in no hurry. Between his teeth still rests the toothpick which he has whittled for himself from the tough yellow wood of the *Palo à Maria,* and on this Jim chews meditatively as he lazily follows after the little calf which is with the big dun cow. Jim slowly takes up the slack of the trailing rope, coiling it in his left hand, and then he lets drop the great noose, bending back a few inches of the noose upon the rope, and grasping both together a little way from the eye of the rope. He then rides on a trifle faster, and with a swift whirl the rope now begins to move about his head, the wrist turning smoothly with it, and the noose of the rope waving in its line like the back of a snake, undulating up and down as well as circling about. The cow pony knows all about this, and Jim pays little attention to the horse. The pony takes him to just the right distance from the right calf, and Jim launches the rope with a swirling swoop which rarely fails in its aim. Enjoying this very much, the little cow horse sets back on its hind legs, and the poor calf comes over, to be dragged to the iron and treated as it would have been on the spring round-up if it had not in some way slipped through the lines. And as it staggers away free of the corral, the heartless cowpunchers say blithely, "Did you hear the ten dollars drop in the box?"

Some day, as the cowpuncher is riding his rounds about the range, his quick eye may note out on the horizon a faint cloud which has not the appearance of a dust trail. This he regards intently, stopping his pony and looking steadfastly toward the spot. The little cloud does not pass away or grow less, but widens and rises, and all at once fans out on the wind, taking

on the unmistakable blue of smoke. There is fire! One might think there would be no harm in a simple little fire, but not so impressed seems the usually unperturbed cowpuncher. There is something in the sight of this little crawling fire which causes him to turn his horse and ride as hard as he can for the ranch house. He knows that the whole range may burn, that the stock may be utterly robbed of their only food, that the ranch is to be ruined and the cattle are to starve unless that little creeping line of blue can be quickly met and conquered. He does not pause to ask how it was started—perhaps by accident of some camp fire left uncovered, perhaps by the deliberate act of some malicious rustler, who would be shot like a dog if found in the act of firing the grass. There is no time to think of anything but the remedy, if any still be possible. On parts of the range, especially that where the ground is high and dry and the grass chiefly the short and scattered buffalo grass or gramma grass, the fire will not spread so rapidly, and can be more easily handled, though even there the food of the range can be entirely destroyed by the flames which eat slowly on. If the grass be full and high, as it is on some parts of the cattle country, more especially along the streams and valleys, and if the wind be strong and in the right direction, the prairie fire will soon be a terrible thing. A swift sea of flame will roll across the range, driving forward or destroying everything in its path. Fences and buildings, if there are any, corrals and stables, everything is in danger. If there has been a little hay put up for winter feed, even the ploughed fire guard may prove insufficient to protect the stacks. There is danger that the entire profit of the season will be destroyed, and all the possibilities for the ensuing season jeopardized. The cowpuncher

swears sternly as he rides, and every man who rolls out of the house and into saddle swears also as he rides for the flames. There is excitement, but there is no confusion, for each exigency of the calling is known by these men, and they are ready with the proper expedient to meet it. Some of the men look to the buildings carefully, back-burning a broad strip about them, so that the full sweep of the fire will not need to be met there. This is done by lighting fires, a little at a time, farther and farther back against the wind, not enough grass being allowed to burn at once to make a serious blaze, and the fire being under the control of the men, who stand ready to whip it out with wet blankets, green rawhides, or anything which comes handiest.

If the haystacks and the houses be considered safe, all the men unite in fighting the main fire, which is a more serious and difficult matter, a dangerous one if the grass be heavy and the wind high. Riding along the edge of the line of the flame, two cowpunchers drag at the ends of their ropes a wet, green hide, a pile of wet blankets, anything which will serve to drag down and beat out the flame which is eating on. The men "straddle the fire," one riding on each side the line of fire, so that the hide drags along the burning grass, the two riding along the edge of the burning in this way, back and forth, until they have dragged out and smothered down the flames, or found their attempt a hopeless one. Sometimes this work may go on for hours, and it may be either in the day or the night, as the case may happen. Though they be hot and tired and thirsty from the long hours of work in the withering heat, they do not pause, but keep on until the fire is checked or until it has burst away from them, beyond all human control, and so rolled on across the range in its course

of desolation. It must be a bad fire if the cowboys do not check it, for they rush into the work with all that personal carelessness of fatigue or danger which marks them in all their work, and so labour as long as they can sit their saddles, sometimes coming out of the smoke with eyebrows singed off, hands blistered, and faces black and grimed, their eyes small and red from the glare and heat of the battle with this enemy of the range. When they are through the fight they sleep, eat, and vow revenge. Ill fares it with the man who fires the range if his offence be ever traced to him. This disastrous disturbance, which imperils the welfare of so many and so much, which sends the cattle in a frightened mass hurrying across the range, mingled with the antelope and deer and wolves, which must also move before the flames—this is something too serious for even the cowman to face with unconcern. He dreads nothing more than a fire. But his diligence and skill in fighting the fire usually confine it in such way that it will burn itself out without a general destruction of the range. If there is little wind, the fire may be caught and stopped at a roadway, or at a dry creek bed, or on high, hard ground, where the rocks and bare earth give the fighters a better chance to wipe out the flames. Behind the ultimate edge of the fire's progress, back to the point where the cowpuncher first saw the tiny line of smoke, there may lie a dozen miles of blackened, smoking prairie, where in the spring the wild plovers will whistle and the big curlews with bent bills will stalk about and utter their wild and shrilly mellow calls.

Such may be some of the incidents of a day on the ranch in one part or another of the cattle country, local conditions, of course, affecting the daily

routine and the general features of the work. It may be seen that the cowboy is rather a watchman than a labourer, a guard rather than a workman. His life at the ranch is rather one of alertness than of exertion. Yet his is no easy or idle task, as any one may find who, not bred to the work, undertakes to do it for the first time. What seems so easy is really difficult. It would take years of practice to rival the cowboy in some of the simplest features of his daily occupation. He is in a way a skilled labourer, competent only after long and hard years of apprenticeship. To measure the force of this assertion, let us suppose that the affairs of a single ranch district were left for a season in the hands of other than skilled cowboys, the place of the latter being taken by men who could not sit a "mean" horse, who could not rope and throw a steer, and who had had no experience in reading range brands. Would not a round-up conducted by such gentleman be a pleasing affair? Would not a drive left to such hands be a reminiscence to dwell upon in after years? How would the season's profits come out if many ranch owners had cowboys about as skilful, let us say, as they themselves in the practical profession of the cowpuncher? No one ever heard of a cowboy's union or of a strike of cowpunchers; yet, if ever a department of labour had capital at its mercy, these riders of the range could have if they chose. Suppose that there was a general walk-out of the cowboys on a round-up just as the herd was formed for the cutting out, it being further added that each cowpuncher had a gun and a playful way of using it! There is a theme for some writer of short stories on Western life, and sufficiently inaccurate to be inviting. Such a scene could never occur in actual life, because the cowpuncher does not hold himself as a servant, but as his

own master. He has no delegates, and belongs to no society save that of the plains, which has time out of mind been a society of the individual, embraced under no classification and subject to no control beyond that of personal honour.

Our friend Jim—and proud may you be if he calls you friend!—is a man able to read brands and ride horses, to follow sign and mark calves, to ride all day and all night, to go hungry and thirsty, to go without shelter or home or guidance, always having in mind the thing he started out to do, the duty that is to be performed. This duty he will do without overseeing. He is his own overseer. He needs no instruction nor advice. No higher type of employee ever existed, nor one more dependable. The rudest of the rude in some ways, he is the very soul of honour in all the ways of his calling. The very blue of the sky, bending evenly above all men alike, has reflected into his heart the instinct of justice—that justice which is at the core of all this wild trade of the range. It is not the ranchman, the man who puts the money into the business, who is the centre of the occupation. It is not he who has made the cattle business. It is the cowpuncher, whom you may be glad to have call you friend.

The actual life in the saddle of an active cowboy is not a long one upon the average, for the hardships of it are too steady, the accidents too common. Any injury received in the pursuit of his calling he bears stoically, after the fashion of the plains, whose precedents were established where there was "lack of woman's nursing, there was dearth of woman's tears." Under all the ills of life the cowboy "'quits himself like a man." That is his standard. There are some who ask for the gallop of the cowboy, and not the

quiet trot, some who think his crudeness and his wildness should be made his distinguishing features. Rather let us say that his chief traits are his faithfulness and manliness. There is his standard—to be a "square man." If you called him a hero, he would not know what you meant.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COWBOY'S AMUSEMENTS.

THE man who is strong rejoices in his strength. The man who is skilled takes pleasure in the renewed exercise of his skill. The old and staid cowboy might not care to run his horse and rope his friends as the younger members of the ranch staff took delight in doing, and the foreman of the ranch might not take the interest in rifle and pistol practice that the younger men did, because he knew that he could shoot well enough already; but each, young or old, followed the life because he loved it for its freedom and its outdoor quality, the sheer attraction it offered to a vigorous and energetic man who needed outlet for his vitality and exercise for his muscles. It was natural, therefore, that the chief amusements of the cowboy should be those of the outdoor air and those more or less in line with his employment.

The cowboy was accustomed to the sight of big game, and so had the edge of his appetite for its pursuit worn off; moreover, he had his regular duties to perform, so that he had not always time to go hunting. Yet he was a hunter, just as every Western man was a hunter in the times of the Western game. The weapons of the cowboy were the rifle, revolver, and rope; of these, more properly the latter two, as these he had always about him. Of the "scatter gun" he

knew nothing at all, and entertained for it a pronounced contempt as a weapon unfit for the use of a man. With the rope the cowboy at times captured the coyote, usually after it had been run hard by the dogs, and under special circumstances he has taken deer and even antelope in this way, though this was, of course, most unusual and only possible under chance conditions of ground and cover. Elk have been roped by cowboys very many times, and it is known that even the mountain sheep has been so taken, almost incredible as that may seem. The buffalo was frequently the object of the cowpuncher's ambitions, though sometimes such a vaulting ambition overleaped itself. An old cowboy who once roped a full-grown buffalo bull described his emotions as decidedly far from pleasant when he found himself attached to such a monster. "I thought I could shore throw ary bull there was," said he, "but that there thing plum run off with me an' the bronch' both, an' the only thing I was thinkin' of was how to turn it loose."

The young buffalo, especially the calves, were easy prey for the cowboy, and he often roped and made them captive. Many instances are known where these animals were found in the round-ups of the early days, and in such case some of them were sure to fall victims to the cowboys, who often took them home and kept them. Buffalo nearly full-grown have in many instances been roped, thrown, and branded by these enthusiasts, and then turned free again upon the range. The beginnings of all the herds of buffalo now in captivity in this country were in the calves roped and secured by cowboys, and these few scattered individuals of a grand race of animals remain as melancholy reminders alike of a national shiftlessness and an individual skill and daring.

It required an expert man to rope and capture a buffalo, even a calf but a few weeks old, for the little fellows were incredibly swift, and asked the limit of a horse's speed and staying qualities. On a hunt for buffalo calves in the Panhandle of Texas, in which our party was so fortunate as to take thirteen buffalo calves, much of the roping was done by a cowboy not yet twenty years of age, who was very skilful in his calling, and an especially fine roper. He enjoyed to the utmost the exciting sport of the buffalo calf chase, as well he might, for few forms of sport ever had a keener tang than this. At times the calves were run hard for over a mile before the swift horses could be urged up close enough, and, after such a chase, it behooved the roper to be sure of his cast. Nor after the successful cast had been made was all the trouble over, for very often the buffalo cow would charge the man thus taking liberties with her calf, and then an interesting situation was developed. The cowboy did not like to release his calf after the pains of the long run, and he did not like to lose his horse on the horns of the enraged cow, which pursued him steadily and viciously. There was sure to be a constricted but exciting chase about a narrow circle, with the rope as its radius and the calf as the pivotal point. In two instances it was necessary to kill the cow to save the cowboy from death or serious injury, but it was rarely he missed his calf if the horse could carry him up, and he never let one free in order to escape the charge of the mother. The offspring of some of these calves live to-day in the largest herd of buffalo now alive in the world.

The buffalo has for years now been gone from the range, and the cowboy will no more rope the little red calves of the curly cattle. It will be rarely, too,

that he will ever again see out on the cow range the great grizzly bear, which once lived far east over the prairie country, but has now gone far back into the mountains. In the past the grizzly was at times seen by the cowboys on the range, and, if it chanced that several cowboys were together, it was not unusual for them to give it chase. Of course, they did not always rope him, for it was rarely that the nature of the country made this possible, and sometimes they roped him and wished they could let him go, for a grizzly bear is uncommonly active and straightforward in his habits at close quarters, and his great power and ferocity make him an almost impossible customer unless all things are favourable. The extreme difficulty of such a combat, however, gave it its chief fascination for the cowboy, and in several recorded cases a party of cowboys have succeeded in capturing alive a full-grown grizzly bear with no means thereto except their horses and ropes. Of course, no one horse could hold the bear after it was roped, but, as one after another came up, the bear was caught by neck and foot and body, until at last he was tangled and tripped and haled about till he was helpless, strangled, and nearly dead. It is said that cowboys have so brought into camp a grizzly bear, forcing him to half walk and half slide at the end of the ropes. Such a bit of wild life would offer excitement sufficient for any man, it would seem, and if any man would be fit for it, then surely would be the hardy and daring cowboy. No feat better than this could show the courage of the man and of the horse which he so perfectly controlled.

One of the great pests of the cattle range was the wolves, which annually inflicted a great loss upon the young stock, and against which an incessant war was waged by the whole ranch force, this more especially

applying to the great gray wolf known as the timber wolf, buffalo wolf, "loper," "loafer," or "lobo" wolf, an animal quite large enough to pull down a yearling or a heifer with the help of not more than one or two of its kind. So great were the ravages of these animals after the buffalo had disappeared and left them no prey but the domestic cattle, that regular campaigns were made against them by a class of men called wolfers, who made an occupation of hunting, trapping, and poisoning them, more especially for the bounty money offered by nearly all the States of the cattle range. It was not possible, however, for the most energetic wolfing operations to clear the range of these pests, for they would drift in again from great distances; so the cowboy throughout the year had more or less opportunity of seeing wolves. Perhaps no wild animal might better be called his staple source of sport. A great many ranches kept good packs of hounds, usually very large and powerful greyhounds, with a few rough-coated staghounds or deerhounds, for the purpose of hunting wolves, and no better sport was offered in the cattle country than this coursing wolves with hounds. The cowboys kept the pack in good hard condition, for the excitement of the horseback running, the mad flight of the long chase, and the ensuing bitter fight at the close when a big "gray" was "stood up," made a sort of thing exactly to the cowboy fancy. In this way a great many wolf pelts found their way to the walls of the ranch house.

One remembers very well a wolf chase with a ranch pack which had killed many grays. The ranchman, riding out over the range early in the morning, saw a heifer pursued by a pair of big wolves, which pulled her down in a little valley. The ranchman rode back to the ranch at full speed and called out the

dogs, all the men, of course, piling out and getting into saddle as soon as the nature of the excitement was known. Wild enough was the scene, as the entire force of the ranch, some seventeen dogs and a dozen men, strung out at speed across the country, each man riding at top speed and the dogs bounding up at the horsemen and running eagerly about, as though beseeching that they be shown their game. The kill was at a distance of some three miles from the house, and it happened that the wolves were approached at their feeding within a quarter of a mile before they took alarm. The dogs sighted them well, and at once shot forward with their inimitable burst of speed. The wolves, already heavy with feed, could not travel at their best, and soon one of them, the larger, was reached by the head dog, a great blue hound that had killed many wolves in the numerous fights of his eventful life. This dog seized the wolf by the side of the neck and rolled it over in its stride. The wolf rose just in time to be caught upon the other side of the neck by the second hound, a powerful red fellow, also of great experience. It is very likely these two dogs would have eventually killed the wolf, large as it was, for finally one or other of them would have shifted and gotten the fatal grip on the throat for which they were both manœuvring, and which neither would have released until the wolf was dead, though possibly both would have been badly cut up before this conclusion was reached. As it was, the wolf was so very large (its skin was six feet six inches in length) that it got to its feet and was actually dragging both dogs along with it as they clung to its neck, trying all the time viciously to get its teeth upon them, which their skill in seizing prevented it from doing. Seeing that the dogs could not kill without

breaking their hold, and disliking to have such valuable hounds cut up by the wolf, as would be the case if it got its jaws free for a moment, the rancher at length rode up and broke the back of the wolf with a pistol shot, so that it was soon killed by the dogs. The cowboys all loudly expressed their dissatisfaction at the shooting of the wolf, for they had all the confidence in the world in their pack, which they always allowed to do their own killing in their frequent runs. In this case the second wolf escaped from the other dogs, which had no dog among their number large and courageous enough to seize and stop a gray. The latter is a tremendous fighter and an ugly customer, so that the ranch pack usually has a war-worn aspect, nearly all the dogs being covered with scars received in fights with wolves or coyotes. The coyotes are run into and killed by good hounds without much trouble. For this wild wolf coursing the cowboys usually preferred heavy greyhounds, though at times there were good wolf dogs among the rough staghounds.

It is sometimes said that the antelope can not be taken by any greyhound, and this is practically true in regard to the single greyhound, though even then with exceptions. A pack of good greyhounds can certainly kill antelope, for the writer has known eleven antelope to be killed in one week by a pack of greyhounds. In certain parts of the country, too, the white-tailed deer offers sport to the ranch pack, or at least did at one time, though perhaps now it would be difficult to find country where the deer could be successfully coursed with hounds. In the Indian Nations the writer has been out with a pack of greyhounds, which included a good pack of ranch dogs, when three deer were killed by the hounds in one day. It was very intense sport, and none enjoyed it better

or were more adept at it than the cowboys, who were sure to be in at the death if that were among the possibilities. The fleet and hardy cow horse is never seen to better advantage than in this rapid and headlong rush across country after so swift an animal as the deer, and few riders but the cowboys could manage to keep in view of so impetuous a chase. The deer can outrun the horse on a straight course, to be sure, but if it double or swerve, as it is sure to do if pressed by the dogs, it is very likely that the cowpuncher and his horse will be near it at the turns. Then it is that the cowpuncher yells and spurs and rides his best, his kerchief flying straight on the wind, his hat front sitting back firm against his forehead under the impact of the air. In such riding one can see some of the finest horsemanship of the world, and certainly some of the most reckless.

The mountain lion is another animal in disrepute upon the cow range, because of its fondness for young calves or colts, but the range and the numbers of these animals was always so restricted that they cut less figure than the wolves in the annual estimate of losses in ranch work. Still, it was not unusual, more especially upon the southern range, where this animal ranged farther out into the open country, to see one of these great red cats stealing off across the plains in its attempt to get away unnoticed. The cowboy knew perfectly well that a more arrant coward never lived than this big, hulking cat, and he had for it a contempt that not all the panther stories of the Sunday newspapers, had he ever seen such a thing as a Sunday newspaper, could have mitigated. No matter whether alone or in company, as soon as he saw the "lion," he made after him at full speed. The cat ran away with incredible great leapings, showing a good turn of

speed for a time; but the savage little cow horse, which enjoyed such a chase as much as did its rider, was sure to soon lay the cowboy well alongside if the country was open enough for a little running. The cat looked back over its shoulder, spitting viciously, but not turning to fight, and in reality scared fairly to its wits' end. The hissing rope soon clinched it, and then, no matter whether the noose fell on paw or neck or body, the little cow horse quickly dragged the panther to death. Wild enough sport, too, was such a chase as this.

The cow range did not often or not long offer any great amount of fur-bearing animals. The wolf, the coyote, the foxes and swifts, the antelope and deer, were the animals most frequently seen by the cowboy in his rounds. In the early days, or even yet, the ranch might be on a bit of good fur country, but if the cowboy found a beaver stream he was more apt to tell some trapper than to trouble his own head about the beaver harvest. At times on the cold northern range the cowboy bethought him of a fur cap for the winter days, and if an otter came in on some stream near the ranch and showed sign of staying about some creek or spring hole for a time, one of the cowboys might undertake to get his hide. It takes a good trapper to catch an otter, and the cowboy was not always a good trapper. But sometimes he would take his rifle and lie at some air hole through the ice where the otter came up to breathe, and wait there for a shot at his game, which he occasionally got. Once in a while the cowboy might go out for a look after some smaller fur-bearing animal, and he was always ready to join any hunting party made up at the ranch for a day or night hunt after wildcats, "leopard cats," lions, or other sort of game which his country might happen to produce; but left to himself, the cowboy was not

always an ardent hunter, especially when the hunt demanded that he go on foot, a means of locomotion not in accordance with his idea of the human proprieties. If he could ride to the game, any sort of chase suited him. Sometimes, if he lived in a country where there was timber along some stream, he might go out at night for a 'coon hunt, for he loved the noise and flurry of the fight with the dogs in the dark. Such sport was possible only over a very limited part of the cow country.

In some parts of the country the cowboy carried a rifle in the holster under his leg, but this sometimes as much for the cow thief or rustler as for any game. The favourite arm of the cowboy was really the six-shooter, and with this weapon he rarely hesitated to attack any animal that came in his way. Very often cowboys killed mountain lions with their revolvers, sometimes shooting them out of trees where they had taken refuge. In a few instances the cowboy has ridden alongside and with his six-shooter killed the grizzly, cinnamon, or "range bear." Constantly inured to the dangers of the open range, and familiar with the sight of large game, there was no animal for which he had much fear or reverence. Really there were some small ones which he feared more than any large ones. The bite of the small plains polecat he dreaded above all things, for he knew that it was practically certain to result in hydrophobia and death. Many cowboys lost their lives in this way, being bitten by this animal when it had crawled into their blankets at night. At the least move of the sleeper the venomous creature would bite, and its bite was accounted almost certainly fatal. One United States army regiment stationed at an Arizona post lost thirteen men in one season through bites of the polecat.

The rattlesnake sometimes crawled into the cowboy's blankets at night, but this was a less dangerous affair, as the snake was apt to be chilled and stupid. Yet another creature much dreaded on the range was the centipede, which was also a night traveller. It is a tradition of the range that if a centipede crawls across a man's flesh the poison left by its hooked and penetrating feet will surely produce insanity. One instance comes to mind where a cowboy was so poisoned by a centipede, and who really became crazed, although he did not die.

The tarantula was still more poisonous than the centipede, but seems to have been less dreaded. It was a favourite amusement at a cow camp, where these hairy monsters abounded, to get a pair of them and set them fighting, which they were always ready to do, tearing off each other's legs with great gusto. A winner of many of these battles was sure to become a ranch pet, and was usually kept in a tin can with a board over the top, ready for action in case anybody came along with a tarantula which he thought could fight, and which he was disposed to back for a little money. The thought comes to mind now, with something of horrified regret, of a certain pet tarantula, a scarred warrior of many battles, which was forgotten and left thirteen years ago in a tin can back of a certain ranch house far out on the cattle range. A tarantula is a hardy animal, and can live long without food, but one must admit that thirteen years is a long time for even a tarantula to go without anything to eat, and it is probable that the pet of the camp has before now departed this life in a way not deserved by so redoubtable a warrior.

The cowboy was fond of any kind of hazard, any manner of fight, any contest of speed or skill or

strength. Not much of a runner himself, he would back his favourite in a foot race. Wrestling and boxing were unknown upon the range, and it is well enough they were, as they might have led to more serious matters, whose result would have been a lessening of the visible supply of material for cowpunchers. The horse race was an ever-present and unfailing source of enjoyment for the cowboy, and if a ranch had a good quarter horse the whole outfit would, if necessary, "go broke" in backing it, as a matter of pride, against a horse from some other ranch or town. Sometimes the cowboys rode their own horses in such races, or sometimes they trusted to riders of lighter weight. No more inveterate gambler or horse racer ever existed than was the North American Indian, and sometimes a ranch outfit would "go after" an Indian village with some favourite running horse, and both parties would back their convictions to the extent of their worldly goods.

Small enough, we may be sure, were the amenities of ranch life, and rude enough were the conditions out on the far, unsettled country, where these rough, strong-natured men had no society but that of their fellow-workmen, and no amusements save such as lay at their hand in the rude surroundings of their employment. Though these amusements were always about, always possible, the life of the cowboy was by no means taken up in their pursuit. He was above all things a labouring man, with much to occupy his attention beside the demands of sport. The romance of the cowboy's life is best seen at a little distance from the cattle range. The visitor to the ranch has an enjoyable time, for his is the zest of novelty. The cowboy in turn cares little for the things whose freshness delights the man from the States. The cowboy

longs to see a theatre, to have a trip to the city, to eat an oyster stew and all the green "garden truck" he can hold. To him it seems that all the great pleasures of life must lie out beyond the range, in the "settlements." The latter term usually meant for the cowboy, over the greater part of the cattle range, some squalid little cow town of the frontier, and ill-fitted enough was such a community to show the quality of civilization. It may be imagined what were the amusements of the cowboy when he left the range and visited the "settlements."

The end of the round-up or the drive, perhaps, found the men of a cow outfit at some such ragged, scattering little Western town. These men, reared in the free life of the open air, under circumstances of the utmost freedom of individual action, perhaps came off the drive or round-up after weeks or months of unusual restraint or hardship, and felt that the time had arrived for them to "celebrate." Each and all of powerful constitution, of superb physical health, and of all the daring and boldness inculcated by wild life amid wild surroundings, these men were ignorant of fear, ignorant of self-restraint, ignorant of life in any but the narrowest sense of the word. Their vices were few and strenuous. They were eager to practise such vices as they knew, and to learn as many more as they could in the brief time of their visit. Merely great, rude children, as wild and untamed and untaught as the herds they led, their first look at the "settlements" of the railroads seemed to them a glimpse of a wider world. The tinsel and tawdry glitter of it caught their eye as a bit of bright stuff attracts that of a babe. They sought to grasp that which they saw. They pursued to the uttermost such avenues of new experience as lay open before them,

almost without exception avenues of vice. Virtue was almost unknown in the cow town of the "front" in the early days. Vice of the flaunting sort was the neighbour of every man. The church might be tolerated, the saloon and dance hall were regarded as necessities. Never in the wildest days of the wildest mining camps has there been a more dissolute or more desperate class of population than that which at times hung upon the edge of the cattle trail or of the cattle range and battened upon its earnings. The chapters of the tale of riotous crime which might be told would fill many books, and would make vivid reading enough, though hardly of a sort to the purpose here. It would be folly to attempt to idealize the cowpuncher in his relations with the early "settlements." He was the wildest of all the wild men of the West, and he rose rapidly into a reputation which, unjust and inaccurate as it is to-day, has clung to him ever since, so that people will have no other cowboy but him of the uncouth garb and the wild and desperate bearing, him who swears, shoots, carouses, and comports himself as a general "terror." This notion of the cowboy is grotesque in its injustice, but none the less it at one time had a certain foundation. There was a time when the name of "cowboy" was one with which to frighten children, and it carried with it everything of absolute disregard for law and order. In the early days of the drive, at the cow town it was a regular and comparatively innocent pastime to "shoot up the town." To shoot out the lights of a saloon was a simple occupation, and to compel a tenderfoot to dance to the tune of a revolver was looked upon as a legitimate and pleasing diversion such as any gentleman of the range might enjoy to his full satisfaction. If a cowboy wanted a drink, he shot a hole in a whisky

barrel and helped himself. As the revolver was thus first in peace, so also it was first in war. All quarrels were arbitrated with the six-shooter, and it took slight cause to start a quarrel when the strong waters of the settlements were doing their work. Hardly a night passed without its "killing," though one never heard of a murder. In the town of Newton, Kan., one of the hardest of the hard cow towns of the early trail days, it is said that eleven men in one day "died with their boots on," as the euphonious expression goes. The coveted art of the six-shooter was an essential of a finished education in that country. The powerful excitements of vile liquor and viler women stirred into a malignant activity all the evil elements of untutored and rugged natures, and the results in many cases were lamentable enough. It is strange that the records of those days are the ones that should be chosen by the public to be held as the measure of the American cowboy. Those days were brief, and they are long since gone. The American cowboy has atoned for them by a quarter of a century of faithful labour, and it is time the atonement were written for him in the minds of the people by the side of the record of his sins.

The stories of excess, the lessons of restraint were the same upon the cattle range and in the cow towns as they are in the cities to-day. Under it all is the same human nature, seeking that which is forbidden, longing, daring, sinning, and repenting. The cowboy was above all things human, and he had the failings of the ordinary man. Yet he had his softer and his more reflective side. The man who would carry a wounded greyhound five miles on his saddle and nurse it for a month as one would a child until it recovered was a man not altogether bad. If his impulses led him

wrong at times—as whose shall not?—he could at least with those equally guilty feel regret and remorse. On the range in the old times, on the range even to-day are men drifting about like wrecks at sea. The old West was full of such characters, men who knew their own stories of self-reproach, regret, remorse, despair. The outward reflex of such feelings was a nature perhaps silent or apparently surly, at times inflammable and uncertain. The West in the good old days asked no questions of any man. It cared not whether the younger cowboys were at times wild and full of freakishness. It asked not why the older men at times seemed never more happy than when they were hard at work.

The amusements of the cowboy were like the features of his daily surroundings and daily occupation—they were intense, large, Homeric.

CHAPTER XIII.

SOCIETY IN THE COW COUNTRY.

The West in the good old times, before the influx of the so-called better classes, was a great and lovable country. We go back to it yet in search of that vigorous individuality which all men love. In the cities men are much alike, and, for the most part, built upon rather a poor pattern of a man. The polish of generations wears out fibre and cuts down grain, so that eventually we have a finished product with little left of it except the finish. In modern life the test of survival is much a question of the money a man is able to make. The successful money-maker can buy a part of the desirable things of life, and he may found a family, the latter, perhaps, not begun in love and mutual admiration of person so much as in admiration of the tangible evidences of that which is called success. Men do not love women because they are rich, nor do women admire men because they are rich; and, after all, the only problems of life are those of bread and butter and of love. All the rest is a mere juggling of these two. Such is the society of the artificial modern life of large communities. In the West the individual reigned, and there had not been established any creed of sandpaper. Should we break up the organizations of society as it is known to-day in the focal points of civilization, should we cast abroad

the men of the cities and bring in the men of the old plains, what a changing about there would be then! Society and human nature and the human race might be benefited by it. But this may never be, and in this country, as in the history of all other countries, there must go on the slow story told by the ages, of more and more wealth, more and more artificiality, more and more degeneration. And yet good human nature, dragged by the hand of the spirit of complex civilization, looks back always at the past. Aside from the love of tinsel, which in time becomes a necessity for many natures, mankind has always loved the strong, because it is only the strong which is fit to be loved. So we go back continually, fascinated, and revel in the stories of strong times.

Among the little cow towns of the frontier the searcher for vivid things might have found abundance of material. Society was certainly a mixed matter enough. It was a womanless society for the most part, hence with some added virtues and lost vices, as well as with certain inversions of that phase. The inhabitants might be cowboys, half-breeds, gamblers, teamsters, hunters, freighters, small storekeepers, petty officials, dissipated professional men. The town was simply an eddy in the troubled stream of Western immigration, and it caught the odd bits of drift wood and wreck—the flotsam and jetsam of a chaotic flood.

In the life of a modern business community a man must beware of too much wisdom. The specialist is the man who succeeds, and having once set his hand to an occupation, one dare never leave it, under penalty of failure in what he has chosen as his life work. In the city he who shifts and changes his employment loses the confidence of his fellow-mortals, who agree that he should know how to do one thing and nothing

else, and should continue to do it diligently all his life. In the West all this was different. Versatility was a necessity. The successful man must know how to do many things. The gleanings of any one field of activity were too small to afford a living of themselves. This fact was accepted by the citizens of the country, sometimes with the grim humour which marked the West. A young lawyer in a Western town had out a sign which read, "John Jones, Attorney-at-Law. Real Estate and Insurance. Collections promptly attended to at all hours of the day and night. Good Ohio cider for sale at 5 cents a glass." A storekeeper had on his window the legend, "Wall Paper and Marriage Licenses," thus announcing two commodities for which there was but very small demand. One of the prominent citizens of such a town was a gambler, a farmer, a fighter, and a school teacher all in one. One of the leaders of the rustlers and cattle thieves who made a little cow town their headquarters was a Methodist minister. It was not unusual for a justice of the peace to be a barber. The leading minister of a certain thriving cow town, which experienced a "boom" in the early railroad days, eked out his scanty salary by working as a sign painter during the week. There seemed to the minds of the inhabitants of the country nothing incongruous in this mixing up of occupations, it being taken for granted that a man would endeavour to make a living in the ways for which he seemed best fitted.

In any early cow town or mining camp of the West there was sure to be a man from Leavenworth. No apparent reason for this curious fact seems ever to have been given, yet it is certainly true that no such town ever was settled without a man from Leavenworth to take part in the inauguration. He was apt afterward

to be one of the town officers. He was nearly always a lawyer, or claimed to have once been one. He was sure to be the first justice of the peace, and in that capacity of high dignity presented an interesting spectacle. The early Western justice of the peace was a curious being at best. Apt to be fully alive to his own importance, he presided at his sessions with a wisdom and solemnity not to be equalled in the most august courts of the land. It was rarely that the justice knew much law, but he nearly always was acquainted with the parties to any suit and with the prisoner who happened to be at bar, and usually he had a pretty accurate idea of what he was going to do with the case before it came up for trial. It may have been such a justice as this of whom the story is told that he made the defendant's lawyer sit down when he arose to reply to the arguments of the prosecution, saying that the counsel's talk served to "confuse the mind of the court." Yet the frontier justice of the peace usually came well within the bounds of common sense in his decisions, as witness the ruling of that Texas justice who gravely declared "unconstitutional" a certain State law which restricted the sale of liquor in his town in many unwelcome ways, he holding that such a law must necessarily be contrary to public policy and against good morals. This man was later elected to the State senate.

The first female inhabitants of the town were also sure to come from Kansas. There seems to be no special reason for this curious feature of the fauna of the cow town in the early days, and it seems difficult to tell why all the men seemed to have left Leavenworth and all the women to have abandoned the State of Kansas, though the fact remained none the less apparent. The family from Kansas nearly always came

in a wagon, and among the family there were usually two or three girls, sure to become objects of admiration for a large cowboy contingent in a short period of time. There never was a cow town which did not have a family including "them girls from Kansas," and their fame was sure to be known abroad all over the local range. One by one the girls from Kansas disappeared down the tortuous road of matrimony, yet still the supply seemed unexhausted, more girls coming from Kansas in some mysterious way.

There was always a Jew merchant in any cow town, who handled the bulk of the business in general supplies. The infallible instinct of his kind led him to a place so free with its money and so loose in its business ideas. The Jew did not come from Kansas, but dropped down from above, came up from below, or blew in upon the wind, no one knew how, but he was always there. He advertised in the local paper, complaining about the rates, of course. "Keep your eye on Whiteman" read his advertisement, and "Geep your eye on Viteman" was the burden of his talk to his customers. It was, indeed, a very wise thing to keep your eye on Whiteman, though perhaps the latter did not mean it in that way in his boastful advice.

There was always a sheriff in a cow town, and he was always the same sort of man—quiet, courageous, just, and much respected by his fellow-men. The public of the cow town had little real respect for the courts, and the judicial side of the law was sometimes farcical; but, by some queer inversion of the matter, all had respect for the executive side of the law, and indeed, recognised that side alone as the law itself. The sheriff was the law. He was worthy of this feel-

ing, for nearly always he was a strong and noble nature, worthy of an unqualified admiration.

There was always a barber in a cow town, and when a town was so run down that it could not support a barber it was spoken of with contempt. There might not be any minister of the Gospel or any church, but there were two or three saloons, which served as town hall and general clubrooms, being the meeting places of the inhabitants. There was no dentist or doctor, though there might be a druggist, who kept half a dozen or so jars and bottles. If a cowpuncher wanted a little alum to cure a hide, the druggist charged him at about the rate of ten or fifteen dollars a pound for it, according to the extent of the need he had just then for the money. If the druggist was playing in fair luck at the time in the nightly poker game, alum was cheaper.

There was always a little newspaper, a whimsical, curious little affair, which lived in some strange fashion, and whose columns showed a medley of registered and published brands and marks for the members of the cattle association living in that district, this business being almost the only source of revenue for the newspaper. Of news there was none, except such as all men knew. The editor of the paper had a certain prestige in political matters, but led withal an existence properly to be termed extra hazardous. The editor always drank whisky when he could get it, just as everybody else did, it being quite too much to ask that he should depart from popular custom; but the paper was ground out from the hand press every week, or almost every week, with a regularity which under the circumstances was very commendable. Sooner or later, if one paper began to make more than a living, another paper came in, and then life assumed an added

interest with the inhabitants. Both papers were then read, so that everybody might see what one editor was saying of the other. The second editor was nearly always a more vindictive man than the first one, and he drank more whisky, and wrote worse English and had a redder nose; but he added life to the town, and he was sure of a fair showing until at some unfortunate time he said the wrong thing. This wrong thing was never far away in the journalism of the range. It behooved the editor to be careful in his criticism of any one, and always to be sure to "boom the town," no matter what else might be omitted.

One of the owners of the saloons was sure to be a gambler as well as a dispenser of fluids. He had more money than anybody else, and also a surer chance of sudden death. He always killed one or two men before his own time came, but his time came some day. He was then properly mourned and buried, and the affair was discreetly mentioned in the papers. If it seemed that the gambler's partner was getting too "bad" to be needed in the economy of the town, he was asked to "move on," and this he was wise enough to do. Another gambler came in then.

The lawyer of the town was something of a personage. His library did not amount to so much, consisting probably of not more than two or three books, not very many, for one can not carry many books when on foot, and the lawyer nearly always walked into town; but the lawyer had all the authorities in his head, and so did not need a library. The lawyer was naturally a candidate for the territorial council, for county assessor, or anything else that had any pay attached to it. Of strictly legal work there was not much to do, but the lawyer always remembered his dignity, and you could always tell him in a crowd,

for he was the only man in the town who did not wear "chaps" or overalls. The lawyer and the county surveyor sometimes had work to do in settling the lines of a homestead or some such thing when water rights were in dispute. He had no occasion to prosecute or defend any client for theft, for everybody in that country was afraid to steal; and burglary was a crime unknown. It was rarely that a man was prosecuted for horse stealing; never, unless the sheriff got to him first. A "killing" sometimes gave the lawyer a chance, but this was not a thing to make much stir about, and very often the killer was set free, because it was usually certain that the other man would have killed him if he could, and that is defence at law. Much more interesting was it when a man was shot and not killed, alike for the rarity of the occasion and for its probable consequences. Everybody wondered then which would be the one to get killed when he was well and around shooting again.

The cow town was very proud of any public improvements, very resentful of any attempt to cast slight upon such improvements, and very jealous of the pretensions of any other town of its neighbourhood. It being rumoured that a certain foothills city over toward the edge of the range was to have a railroad tunnel which would add to its attractions, it was gravely suggested by the citizens of a rival town located well out on the plains that the latter should also have a tunnel, and not allow itself to be surpassed in the "race of progress" by any "one-armed sheep-herding village." The county surveyor lost popularity because he tried to point out how expensive it would be to construct a tunnel out on the prairie.

The first coal-burning stove, the first piano, the first full-length mirror to come to town made each an occa-

sion of popular rejoicing. At a time when all was progressing as usual in the leading saloon of such a town one evening, two of the players at a card table, without word of warning, arose and began shooting at each other in the celeritous yet painstaking fashion of the country. They were both caught by friends before any damage was done to either man, but the aim of one being disconcerted by the grasp upon his wrist, his bullet missed its mark and shattered the stove door, on the big new stove which was the boast of the community. For this careless shooting he received a general censure.

One time there came to a certain cow town on the range a Missouri family who brought along a few hogs, about half a dozen young porkers of very ordinary appearance, but which none the less became the objects of a popular ovation, as being the first hogs ever brought in on the range, and an attraction which it was not pretended could be duplicated by the rival town over in the foothills. These hogs were the pride of the settlement for some time, until at an evil hour they chanced to be spied by a drunken cowpuncher, who was visiting town that day and enjoying himself according to his lights. When the cowpuncher saw these new and strange creatures in the streets of the town, he at once went back to his horse, got his rifle from his saddle, and forthwith inaugurated a hunt after them, this resulting in the early and violent death of all the "shotes." No one objected in the least to his shooting in the streets, for that was the privilege of all men, but it was voted a public offence to kill those hogs. The cowpuncher was censured by some of the citizens, including the druggist, who at that time was pleasantly intoxicated himself, and he would have killed the druggist had not the latter pleaded

that he was not armed. The cowpuncher, very fairly, it must be acknowledged, told the druggist to go back to his store and get his gun, and then to come on and they would have their little matter out together. With this invitation the druggist complied, and soon appeared at the corner of his cabin with a long six-shooter in hand, calling to the cowpuncher to come on down the street and be killed like a gentleman. The street was properly cleared for the accommodation of the two, a number of us stepping into the newspaper office, and standing well back inside the door, though with heads out to see what was going to happen.

At this moment there appeared on the scene the sheriff of the county, who had concluded that this was a matter of sufficient note to warrant his interference. The sheriff was a large, burly man, who spoke very little at any time and was now quite silent as he walked up the street steadily, without any hurry, into a line directly between the hostile forces. His hands, with the thumbs lightly resting in his belt, made no move toward the long guns which hung at each side. His face was quite calm and stolid, and with a certain dignity not easy to forget. As he passed the newspaper office, some one made some light remark to him—for all the time he was walking straight up to the rifle of the cowpuncher, who was warning him to step aside, so that he could kill the druggist, whom he appeared to dislike at the time. To the remark the sheriff made no answer, but turned his heavy, solemn face, with a look which said plainly that in his opinion a man ought not to be interrupted when he was in pursuit of a duty which might end in his death. The sheriff was not afraid, but he knew what was to be done. The deputy, who accompanied him, was white as paper and evidently badly scared. The two

walked on up the street slowly, the sheriff never hastening a step, until finally they reached the place where the cowpuncher stood, the latter having been puzzled by the slow and quiet advance until he had forgotten to begin shooting, though the druggist continued to shout out defiance. The sheriff said nothing, and made no attempt to pull his gun, or to cover his man in the style usually mentioned in lurid Western literature. He simply reached out his hand and took the cowpuncher's rifle away from him, setting it down against the side of a near-by house. Then he said: "Now, Jack, you d—d little fool you, I don't want no more of this. You go on down to my house an' go to bed to onct, an' don't you come out till you git plum sober. Go on, now." And Jack went.

The sheriff then went on down to the druggist, who had by this time slipped into his store and hid his gun. Him the sheriff rated well as a disturber, but did not take in charge at all. The loss of the "shotes" was generally lamented, but on the following morning Jack apologized about that, paid for the "shotes," invited everybody to drink to their memory, and at the suggestion of friends both he and the druggist shook hands over the matter and forgot all about it. This affair of course never got into the courts, as indeed why should it? The settlement reached was eminently the wisest and most effectual thing that could have been done, and showed well enough the sterling common sense of the sheriff, who retained the friendship of all parties. His deputy, if left alone, would have tried to "cover his man," would very likely have been killed himself, and had he succeeded in getting his man to jail the latter would very likely have killed the druggist as a point of honour as soon as he

got out. The peace and dignity of the town were far better preserved as it was.

In the communities of the frontier men were sometimes apt to be a trifle touchy and suspicious of their fellow-men, perhaps a bit ultra in their notions of personal honour and personal rights. A cowpuncher from the Two Hat outfit was once heard explaining a little instance of this. "It was this a' way," said he, speaking of the recent killing over on Crooked Creek of Bill Peterson, who had been shot by his neighbour, a man by name of Sanders. "Peterson an' Sanders had both of 'em started hen ranches, allowin' to make plenty o' money next year, when the hens had sort o' got used to the range an' begun to do well on the feed. Sanders, he come in there first, an' he 'lowed he wouldn't have no one to buck aginst in the aig business, but Peterson he moves in on the creek too, and lays out his ranch right up agin Sanders, an' that makes Sanders plenty mad. Them two fellers, they got so blame jealous of each other they used to be afraid to go to sleep, for fear the other feller would think up some scheme or other. The wild cats and coyotes got in among the corrals like, an' before long they mighty nigh cleaned up the whole cavvieyard o' hens fer both of 'em, but they couldn't see it that way, an' each accused the other of stealin' his hens, which of course we knowed meant trouble some day.

"Fin'ly, these fellers got so jealous of each other that one feller he'd stay out in his hen pasture all day, a-herdin' back the grasshoppers to keep 'em from goin' on to the other feller's range—which them grasshoppers is shore good feed fer hens. Peterson, he consults a lawyer about this, and he comes back and tells Sanders that grasshoppers is critters *ferry natoory*, or somethin' o' that sort, and so

they belongs to everybody alike. Sanders he says he don't care a d—n about that, he aint goin' to have Peterson's hens a-eatin' his 'hoppers, because he saw the place first. So they at last got to sort o' havin' it in fer each other. One day Sanders he come down to me an' ast me to lend him my gun, because his was out o' order, an' he had to kill Peterson purty soon. So I let him take my gun, which is a shore daisy, an' next mornin' he laid fer Peterson when he come out the house. Peterson he saw him, an' he come out a-shootin', but Sanders he was a leetle too quick fer him. Sanders he quit the ranch then, an' now you kaint get a aig in this whole country fer a dollar a aig, not noways."

In the rude conditions of the society of the frontier the man of "sand" was the man most respected. If one allowed himself to be "run over" by the first person, he might as well be prepared to meet the contempt of all the others. Sooner or later a man was put to the test and "sized up" for what sort of timber he contained. If he proved himself able to take care of himself, he was much less apt to meet trouble thereafter. The man who was willing to mind his own business was not apt to meet with the professional bully or bad man of the town. The latter was a person who understood the theory of killing and escaping the law. He was confident in his own ability to pull quick, and it was his plan to so irritate his antagonist that the latter would "go for his gun." After that it was a case of self-defence. In the great cities the man who draws a deadly weapon is severely handled by the law, but in the old days on the frontier the bearing of arms was a necessity, and their general use made all men familiar with them and deprived them of half their terror. The stranger in the cow town was at first much

troubled when he heard of a "killing" next door to him, but soon he became accustomed to such things and came to think little of them. The fashions of a country are its own and are not easily changed by a few; the change is apt to operate in quite the opposite direction. It is not the case that all the dwellers on the frontier were brave men, but courage is much a matter of association, and comes partly from habit after long acquaintance with scenes of danger and violence. The citizens of the cow town all wore guns, and did not feel fully dressed without such appurtenances. There was but one respectable way of settling a quarrel. It was not referred to the community, but to the individual, for in that land the individual was the supreme arbiter. None the less, many a coward's heart has beaten above a pistol belt, and nowhere in the world was such a fact more swiftly and unerringly determined than in a primitive community such as that in question. Upon the other hand, the rudest of the inhabitants of that community would recognise the quality of actual courage very quickly, and the man who stood highest in the esteem of his fellow-men was he who had the reputation of being a "square man," not "looking for trouble," but always ready to meet it if it came.

A wealthy and respected cattleman of a certain part of the cow range had a niece who ran away and married a renegade ranch foreman against whom she had been warned. This man soon began to abuse her, and she returned to her former home. The quarrel was patched up, but the girl's uncle sent word to the husband that if she ever was obliged to come back home again, she should never again go away to live with him. The husband sent back word that he would kill the uncle on sight. To this the cowman made no

reply, but he always rode abroad with a rifle across his lap. One day he had word that his enemy was about to waylay him, and accordingly he was upon the lookout for him. As he entered the edge of a bit of wood, he saw the dutiful relative waiting for him, but luckily looking in the wrong direction. The wind being in his favour, the cowman drove up within a short distance of the man who was seeking to kill him, and then calling to him, killed him in his tracks when he turned. In this act he was upheld by all the society of the range, and was never in the least called to account for it, as it was thought he had done quite what was right and needful. He was never molested by any more relatives after that. This incident was long ago forgotten in his history, and a quieter, more respected, or more useful citizen does not live than he is to-day, nor one more marked for his mildness and even-tempered disposition. He did only what in his time and under his surroundings was the fit and needful thing to do.

Such a man as this was the cowman who happened to be standing in a saloon one day, talking with some friends as he rested his elbows back of him on the bar against which he was leaning. The conversation was interrupted by a cowpuncher of the frisky sort, such as in those days occasionally materialized in the cow town for a little lark. This cowpuncher rode his horse into the saloon and up to the bar, declaring that both he and the horse had come a long way and were thirsty, and must both have a drink. His requests having been complied with, he began to shoot around a little, and drove everybody out of the saloon except this one cattleman, who still stood quietly with his back against the bar, leaning back upon his elbows, this directly in the middle of the room, which was

only about twenty feet square. The cattleman stood there saying nothing, and finally the cowpuncher rode on out. When asked why he had not driven out the "old man" too, he replied that he had not seen him.

"You could shore of seen him if you looked hard," said one of his friends, "fer he was right at you there in the middle of the room."

"Well, I never did see him," said the cowpuncher gravely. "My eyes ain't allus as good as they ought to be, sometimes." As a matter of fact the reputation of the "old man" was such that the cowboy was very wise in not seeing him and undertaking to run him out.

Sometimes in the winter season society in the cow town would be enlivened by a ball. Such a ball was a singular and somewhat austere event, and one which it would be difficult to match to-day in all the land. The news of the coming ball spread after the mysterious fashion of the plains, so that in some way it became known in a short time far and wide across the range. The cowboys fifty miles away were sure to hear of it and to be on hand, coming horseback from their ranches, each man clad in what he thought was his best. The entire populace of the cow town was there, the ballroom being the largest room to be found in the town, wherever that might chance to be. Refreshments were on hand, sometimes actually cake, made by the fair hands of the girls from Kansas. A fiddler was obtained from some place, for where a few men are gathered together there is always sure to be a fiddler; and this well meaning, if not always melodious, individual was certain to have a hard night's work ahead of him.

Of course there was a great scarcity of lady partners, for the men outnumbered the women a dozen

to one. No woman, whatever her personal description, needed to fear being slighted at such a ball. There were no wall flowers on the range. The Mexican washwoman was sure of a partner for every dance, and the big girl from Kansas, the little girl from Kansas, the wife of the man from Missouri, and all the other ladies of the country there assembled, were fairly in danger of having their heads turned at the praise of their own loveliness. In the Southwest such a dance was called a *baille*, and among the women attending it were sure to be some dark-eyed *señoritas* with *mantilla* and *reboso*, whose costume made contrast with the calico and gingham of the "American" ladies. The dancing costume of the men was various, but it was held matter of course if a cowboy chose to dance in his regulation garb, "chaps," spurs and all. In the more advanced stages of society it became etiquette for a gentleman to lay aside his gun when engaging in the dance, but he nearly always retained a pistol or knife somewhere about him, for he knew there might be occasion to use it. Sometimes the cowpuncher danced with his hat on, but this later became improper. There are few more startling spectacles, when one pauses to think of it from a distance, than a cowboy quadrille in which there was a Mexican woman with only one leg, a girl from Kansas who had red hair, and two cowboys who wore full range costume.

Between dances the cowpuncher entertained his fair one with the polite small talk of the place; surmises that the weekly mail had been delayed by some mule getting "alkalied over on the flats"; talk of the last hold-up of the mail; statistics of the number of cattle shipped last year, and the probable number to be shipped this; details of the last "killing" in

the part of the country from which the cowpuncher came, etc. Meantime the lady was complimented openly upon her good points and those of her costume, not to her personal displeasure, for human nature is much the same no matter where the ball is held. It sometimes happened that the lady was not averse to sharing with her escort of a bit of the liquid refreshments that were provided. The effects of this, the stir of the dancing, the music, the whirl and go of it all, so unusual in the experiences of most of the attendants, kept things moving in a fashion that became more and more lively as the hours passed by. The belated range man, riding full gallop to town, could see from a distance the red lights of the windows at the hall, and could hear afar the sound of revelry by night. Excited by this, he spurred on his horse the faster, answering to the dancers with the shrill yell of the plains, so that all might know another man was coming to join in the frolic. He cast his bridle rein over the nearest corral post, and forthwith rushed in to mingle with the others in a merriment that was sure to last to daybreak. Out of this ball, as out of other balls, were sure to arise happiness, heartburnings, jealousies, and some marriages. An engagement on the plains was usually soon followed by a marriage, and such an engagement was not made to be broken; or if it was broken to the advantage of another man, there was apt to be trouble over it between the men. Sometimes the night of the ball did not pass without such trouble. Any such affair was apt to be handled most delicately in the next issue of the paper; although funeral notices were not customary there, the papers being printed only each week or so.

The cow town was sure to have among its dwellers some of the odd characters which drifted about the

West in the old times, men who had somehow gotten a warp into their natures, and had ceased to fit in with the specifications of civilization. Such men might be teamsters, cowboys, or those mysterious beings who in some way manage always to live without doing any work—these not to be called tramps, for the tramp was something unknown in the cow town. Such a man might have a little cabin of his own, with a fireplace and a bed of blankets. Nearly all the male population of the town was made up of single men, and of these nearly all did their own cooking, living in a desultory, happy-go-lucky sort of fashion, with no regularity in any habits. Some of these men were educated, and had known other conditions of life. Bitterer cynics never lived than some of these wrecks of the range. There was Tom O——, a cowpuncher, apparently as ignorant and illiterate as any man that ever walked, but who had his Shakespeare at his tongue's end, and could quote Bryon by the yard. Tom's only song was—

"I never loved a fond gazel-l-e!"

The song rarely got further along than that. A cheerful fatalist, Tom accepted the fact that luck was against him, and looked upon life as the grimmest of jokes, prepared for his edification. No matter how ill his fortune, Tom never complained, even as he never hoped. He had, too, a certain amount of enterprise in his character. At last accounts he was headed for the Indian Nations, it being his expressed intention to marry an Indian woman and so become a member of the tribe, this being the easiest way open to fortune which offered to his mind. He had several wives scattered over the range at different points, and at times he was wont to discuss the good and bad points of these

with the utmost candour and impartiality, thus showing himself a liberal and philosophical man.

The foreman of the O T ranch was a good cowman, who stood well with the men of his own outfit and of the neighbouring ranches. This man never at any time, either upon his own ranch or in town, was known by any other name but that of "Springtime." His accounts at the stores were run under the name of "Springtime" and in no other way. His real name one can not give, for it seems that no one ever thought of asking him what it was. "Springtime" was a quiet man, although, like Tom at times, given to meditative song. As in the case of Tom, his song never got beyond the first line, which ran—

"Whe-e-en the springtime cometh, ge-e-ntle Annie-e-e-e!"

It never seemed to trouble him what had happened or might happen in the springtime, and for him the springtime never seemed to get any closer. Nor did this fact give concern to his neighbours, who gave him the name "Springtime" in all gravity, as being the title by which he would be most readily and generally known.

Other citizens of the cow town were One-eyed Davis, and Hard-winter Johnson, and Cut-bank Bill, and Two-finger Haines, and Straight-goods Allen, and, of course, Tex and Shorty and Red, and all sorts of citizens whose names never got further along than that, unless in connection with their respective ranch brands. Thus, in speaking of an event of interest, down at the saloon or store, the proprietor would say, "Yesterday, that feller Charlie, from down on the Hashknife, he comes in here an' he says," etc. And in course of reply some one else might cite what Pinto, of the Hat brand, had said upon the subject;

all men knowing by those presents that there was meant a certain individual whose vast extent of freckles had by common consent earned for him the name of "Pinto." No one seemed to take amiss these clinging nicknames, and indeed it was as well to accept them without protest. A singular incident in a man's life, or a distinguishing personal peculiarity, was usually the origin of the name. In the simple and direct methods of thought which obtained it was considered wise to give a man a name by which he would be known easily and precisely. There might be many men by the name of John Jones, but there would be only one Overcoat Jones—a man who had the odd habit of wearing an overcoat all summer, for reasons which seemed to suit himself, and which therefore suited his acquaintances. There might be many Wallaces, but Big Foot Wallace was known from one end of the range to the other. There might, indeed, have been a certain courtesy in this plains nomenclature. It was one of the jests of the later West to ask a man, "What was your name back in the States?" but this was never seriously done in the cow country of the early times, because it might have been one of the things one would rather have left unsaid. Too much personal curiosity was not good form, and met with many discouragements. Under the system of the society of the cow town, it was quite enough to know a man by his local and accepted name, which should distinguish him easily; and the man was valued for what he was, not for what his name was, or for what that of his father had been. Some cheap persons of the later West bestowed upon themselves nicknames of rather ferocious sort for the purpose of impressing upon dwellers of the East a sense of their wild Western character; but the man who had his card en-

graved as Dead Shot Dick, or Charlie the Killer, or that sort of thing, did not make a practice of claiming his title when he was away from the new settlements and back in the society of the old cow country, where life was real and earnest in its lines, and assertions of a personal sort apt to be taken up for serious investigation.

In short, the cow town of the good old times was a gathering of men of most heterogeneous sorts, a mass of particles which could not mix or blend. Of types there was abundance, for each man was a study of himself. He had lived alone, forced to defend himself and to support himself under the most varying and trying circumstances, very often cut off from all manner of human aid or companionship for months at a time. Needing his self-reliance, his self-reliance grew. Forced to be independent, his independence grew. Many of these men had been crowded out of the herd in the States, and had so wandered far away from the original pastures of their fellows. They met in the great and kindly country of the old West, a number of these rogues of the herd, and it was a rough sort of herd they made up among themselves. They could not blend; not until again the sweep of the original herd had caught up with them, and perforce taken them in again among its numbers. Then, as they saw the inevitable, as they saw the old West gone forever, leaving no place whither they might wander farther, they turned their hands to the ways of civilization, and did as best they could. In many cases they became quiet and useful and diligent citizens, who to-day resent the raking up of the grotesque features of their past, and have a contempt for the men who try to write about that past with feigned wisdom and unfeigned sensationalism. Among those citizens of the old cow

town were many strange characters, but also many noble ones, many lovable ones. A friend in that society was really a friend. Alike the basest and the grandest traits of human nature were shown in the daily life of the place. Honour was something more than a name, and truth something less than a jest. The cynicisms were large, they were never petty. The surroundings were large, the men were large, their character was large. Good manhood was something respected, and true womanhood something revered. We do very ill if we find only grotesque and ludicrous things in such a society as this. We might do well if we went to it for some of its essential traits—traits now so uncommon among us that we call them peculiarities.

A more curiously democratic form of society never existed upon earth than that of the old cow town. Each man knew his own place, but felt that that place was as good as any other man's. In the cow town, if anywhere, all men were free and equal. Perhaps no better instance of this curious independence in the genuine cowpuncher could well be found than in the story of a certain ranch foreman, whom we may as well call Jim, and his relations with his employer, who, according to the story, was a foreigner, an Earl of something or other, who had come to America to engage in the cow business. It seems that upon the first day they spent upon the ranch together Jim appeared at the dinner table without any invitation, and moreover without removing his hat. The earl objected not only to Jim's hat but to his presence, saying that he was not accustomed to dining with his servants. This was an error on the part of the earl, really a most unfortunate remark to make, but in extenuation it should be added that he was not to be blamed so much for it, for he

was a newcomer in the cow country and had had very little time to become acquainted with its ways. But this fact Jim did not pause to consider. Without protest or parley, he drew his revolver, and so beat the earl about the head with it as nearly to kill him, though not so nearly, so says the story, as to prevent his apologizing freely.

"Why, that feller," said Jim, in a surprised and injured manner, when later speaking of the occurrence, "he put on more airs than a cook! . . . But," he added later, "he was all right after that, an' after a while he got to be a pretty good sort o' feller, fer a Englishman."

Over this vast, unsettled region of the old West the cattle of the cowman roamed, and this wild grazing was almost the only possible industry of the country. Therefore the employments of the cowman's occupation were practically the only ones open to a man in search of a means of making a living. Almost everybody had at one time or another tried his hand at "punching cows," and therefore the little town which made the headquarters of the surrounding country was sure to have all the flavour of the range. Its existence, of course, depended upon the trade of the great ranches which lay about it, at distances perhaps of forty, fifty, or even nearly a hundred miles. Distances had not the same values in that country that they have in the older States. A neighbour who was only fifty miles away was comparatively near. All the supplies of the town were freighted in perhaps a hundred and fifty miles from the railroad. The rancher thought nothing of driving sixty or seventy-five miles in to town to get his groceries. The cowboy would ride thirty or forty miles after the ranch mail, and think no more of it than one does of going down town on

the street car. The roads were usually hard and good, and the air pure and stimulating. Either man or horse can endure very much more physical exercise in the country than in the city, because the air is better. The atmosphere of the plains was very fresh and pure.

Now and then, therefore, the residents of the town, who perhaps themselves had ranch interests or "claims" somewhere out in the country, would have the quiet of their daily lives broken by the visits of the men from the cow ranches, near or far. Then the merchant sold his goods, the saloon keeper smiled with pleasure, the editor had use for his pencil, the lawyer stood in readiness, the justice of the peace pricked up his ears, and the coroner idly sauntered forth. The cowman was great. He was the baron of the range. Cheap cattle and still cheaper Mavericks, free grass and free water, with prices always rising in the markets at the end of the drive—no wonder that the cowman was king and that money was free upon the range. No wonder that things were lively when the cow outfit rolled into town, and that the pleasantries of the men were tolerated. It was known that if they shot holes in the saloon looking-glasses, they would come in the next day and settle for the damage, and beside throw the saloon open to the public. Those were the good old days—the days when one cowman rode into a restaurant and ordered "a hundred dollars worth of ham and eggs" for his supper; or when a certain cowman who had just sold his beef drive to good advantage came home and "opened the town," ending his protracted season of festivities by ordering for himself at the little tumble-down hotel a bath of champagne, filled with the wine at five dollars a bottle. He said he wanted a bath, and that nothing was too good for him at the time; and his wishes were

complied with cheerfully, though the last champagne of the cow town went into the bath.

One can see it now, the little cow town of the far-away country, a speck on the great gray plain, the mountains lying beyond it, blue and calm, all about the face of Nature looking on at it sleepily, through eyes half shut and amused, everywhere a strange, moving, thrilling silence, that mysterious, awful, fascinating silence of the plains, whose charm steals into the blood, never thereafter to be eliminated.

> The cark of care, the grind of grief, the racking of regret—

all these things are gone, vanished from the face of this silent, smiling, resting land.

> A dard-hued lizard on the dark-hued sand;
> A rock; a short gray tree; an earth-built hut.
> Around, an edgeless plain; above, an equal sky.
> She sits and dreams. The whiteless blue of heaven
> Comes down to meet the greenless gray of earth—
> And compasses her dream.

It is high and glaring noon in the little town, but it still sleeps. In their cabins some of the men have not yet thrown off their blankets. Along the one long, straggling street there are few persons moving, and those not hastily. Far out on the plain is a trail of dust winding along, where a big ranch wagon is coming in. Upon the opposite side of the town a second and more rapid trail tells where a buckboard is coming, drawn by a pair of trotting ponies. At the end of the street, just coming up from the *arroyo*, is the figure of a horseman—a tall, slim, young man—who sits straight up on his trotting pony, his gloved hand held high and daintily, his bright kerchief just lopping up and down a bit at his neck as he sits the jog-

going horse, his big hat pushed back a little over his forehead. All these low buildings, not one of them above a single story, are the colour of the earth. They hold to the earth therefore as though they belonged there. This rider is also in his garb the colour of the earth, and he fits into this scene with perfect right. He also belongs there, this strong, erect, and self-sufficient figure. The environment has produced its man.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NESTER.

THE destruction of the cattle range was a matter of doom. It was foregone that all these wide lands should at some time be claimed by those thousands of human beings who had taken fully upon themselves the compact of society. The cowman is a creature of unmeasured lands, of wide methods, of no multiplicity of laws or of acknowledged obligations. The husbandman is a man of small holdings of land, of eye jealous of his own rights, of reverence for the laws whose protection he covenants in the terms of his surrender of personal freedom to the society of which he has become a member. The cattle range is a womanless country. The farming country is a land of homes. Society is built up of homes, and the laws of society will sooner or later trend in favour of the man with the home and the yoke, the more willing or the more helpless slave.

The term "nester" was one applied in half contempt by the cattle men of the Southwest to those early squatters and homesteaders who first began to manifest a disposition to abandon the saddle for the plow, to cease ranching and go to farming. The nester might be a cowboy himself, who had met his fate in some pair of eyes that held him back from long journeyings. He might be some lean and sallow individ-

ual, whose wagon and team had brought him down from some State where things were getting too much crowded for him. Probably the first great accession of numbers received by the cult of the nester came from the settlements of Germans who, early in the century, were colonized in large numbers in portions of Texas. There are whole communities of these people in parts of that State to-day, and most of them are valuable citizens, but many of them were hard enough cases in the early days, and much disliked by the native American population, from whom their ways differed in almost every respect. The instinct of these people was all for farming, and they retained then, as they do to-day, all their habits of economy, industry, and thrift. Added to this disposition there was the wildness of nature acquired by years of free life on the frontier in the early days. These foreigners kept pretty much to themselves, after their clannish fashion, and each man was content to till his little holding, perhaps by some water course or spring, and concerned himself little about the affairs of the great cattle baron whose herds roamed the country at large. It might be that the homesteader was really only a squatter, with no actual title to his property at all, but possession was ten points of the law in those days. Or it might be that he had taken up his land under the State laws governing the matter (for Texas was never subject to the United States land laws, reserving title to her own lands when she entered the Union), or who had bought his land from some earlier owner and paid for it. Perhaps he had a few horses and oxen, a few rude farming implements, a little flock of sheep or goats. He had without doubt a " woman " and a flock of children, some dogs, and a rifle. Surly and inhospitable to a degree some of these foreigners

were, giving no welcome, perhaps, to the party of horse hunters who came over from the nearest ranch, sometimes refusing visitors the right to water or to camp in their yards, a thing unheard of in the annals of the land. What was thus refused them the rude and spirited range riders customarily took for themselves, telling the "Dutchman," as they contemptuously called their unwilling host, that if he objected too much they would hang him to a corner of his own corral. Sometimes, indeed, they did do such things, and that, with the original discourtesy, at times created hard feelings among the relatives of the departed, who viewed with sullenness every movement of the encroaching cattle men.

The vast lands of Texas could not fail to attract the attention of persons contemplating a venture in the cattle business, and at the time of the first "cattle boom" a great many men went into Texas for their operations, among these a number of wealthy foreigners who sought a place to use capital and younger sons. The country was fairly crowded with capitalists, who wanted possession of large bodies of land for the use of their herds. Such a cowman would look out a tract of land, perhaps twenty or thirty miles square, and would lease or buy it, paying perhaps a few cents an acre for some of it, or more for the better-watered portions. Public lands, school lands, railroad lands were taken possession of in large bodies. These tracts the cowman proceeded to fence in, not always being very careful how much he included in his fence, so that he was sure he had enough. Inside the sweep of his "pasture" fence he might have the little "nests" of dozens of the native small ranchers who had settled first on this land. These perhaps had their roads established, over which they went to town, or

after their wood, or went hunting, or made any of their various trips away from home. This made no difference to the cattle man, who cut off the road, and perhaps left no gate within ten miles of it; nor did he serve notice on the nester where the gate might be found. This mattered little to the latter. He simply cut his own gate when he came to the fence. This first gap so cut was the sign of war—a war in which many lives were lost and much property hazarded before adjustment was found for the deep principles involved.

The big landowner went on with his fencing operations, and returned along the line some morning to find the fence gapped in half a dozen places. Perhaps he missed certain cattle whose range habits should have made them easy to find at a certain point. Perhaps he traced certain suspicious hides to the butcher shops in the towns. Of these things he made no complaint. But he stationed some cowpuncher, who was a good sure shot with the Winchester, at some gully near the trail over which the nester was apt to come some morning. The cowpuncher cheerfully shot the nester, and the cousin of the nester killed the cowpuncher, and that created a feeling of injury at the ranch for which the cowpuncher was working. Perhaps there was a little riding party the next day. Perhaps there were several nesters hiding out for a time. But the gaps continued to appear in the lines of the great wire fences, rendering them useless. Parties of cowboys lay out at night regularly watching the fence at suspected points, and parties of nesters lay out for the cowboys. Many on both sides were killed. One large landholder of foreign nationality put up twenty miles of fence in one line. He was disliked by his own cowboys as well as by the nesters, and all of

them joined hands to destroy the fence. In the night time the men cut the fence in hundreds of places, and hitching their ropes to the long strands of wire dragged them bodily out upon the prairie. By morning the entire fence had disappeared.

The country had been free too long for a man to be hindered in his riding. What should one do who met this impassable wire when he was on his way across the wild country, riding by the shortest line, as had been his wont in the past? It was a dangerous thing, this fence upon the waterless country, which shut one off from the necessaries of life. There had never been bred in that land any respect for a law which cut a man off from the watering places, and from the right to travel across the open range. By no means was the "foreign" nester alone in his feeling against the fences. Natives joined him, and all men whose original liberties were transgressed. The cause of the nester grew in strength and became indeed a popular one.

It angered well-nigh to a point of frenzy many foreign and alien capitalists to learn that they had come indeed upon a land of the free; for the State of Texas had no trespass law. The remedy was to collect civil damages against the man who cut one's fence, and failing that, to kill him; the latter, a game at which he could also play, and often did. All sober-minded men began to see that the fencing of the country was obnoxious to the institutions which had long prevailed, and that there had been traversed the sense of justice in the hearts of a great body of the population. The question was one which demanded settlement, and at length the aid of the courts was invoked. In dozens and hundreds the nesters were arrested and brought in for trial. At one session of the

court in a certain little Texas village, in the early '80's, nearly two hundred fence cutters were indicted by the grand jury. When their time came up for trial they were on hand—very much so. The town thronged with them. Each man of them had a Winchester and a revolver, and they held together in a great body of silent, watchful, determined men. The jailer of the town had a pair of valued hounds which he at occasion used in tracking escaped prisoners. Early in the day both of these hounds were found dead, poisoned by meat thrown over the jail wall to them. The jailer swore he would kill the man who poisoned the dogs. The sheriff, who was himself later killed, the United States marshal who had made most of the arrests, and who met death in the course of his duties at another time, together with the deputy sheriff, who was also killed later on, all at this time urged the jailer to keep quiet. The tension of the community was very great. All knew that if the limits of the law were enforced, the officers of the law would have to fight the whole body of their "prisoners." Really the court was in the hands of the prisoners, and had common sense enough to see it. One or two light fines were imposed, in cases where it was obviously just or feasible, and the other cases were dismissed or "continued."

Thus a state of wholesale war was temporarily averted in one section of the country. In other sections the war went on also, with varying results. The chief battles were fought upon the range, and many and bitter were the feuds in the outlying portions of the cow country. The name of the nester spread to other parts of the Southwest, and he was regarded with hatred or open contempt over the cattle country of New Mexico, where he too often turned up in legal possession of some choice bit of water front, which he

misused, according to the cowman, by applying it to the purposes of irrigation. But everywhere the nester stood on his rights, legal and personal. He was as good a shot as any, and he had lived on the "front" as long as any, and he had all the wild frontier reliance upon himself and the swift hand of resentment for any injury. In the West it was never well to allow any man to "run over you," and he who suffered this forever lost caste. The nester was born to this creed as much as the cowman, and he lived up to it as sternly. Slowly the little wars went on, the underlying questions meantime receiving gradual adjustment in the courts. Naturally, a sort of compromise was the outcome, giving to each industry, so desirable of itself, a proper showing, and holding both to a stricter observance of the laws. To-day the original usages and necessities of the wilder past may be seen in some of the laws of the cow country. The great ranges of Texas are fenced, the land of the original source of the American cattle industry being the first to give up the "free grass" of the range. The great "pastures," as they are called, have fences running twenty, thirty, forty miles in unbroken line at times. But if one need to cross one of the great tracts of land, he shall have "wood and water right" to camp by the roadside wherever he may be. If the landholder fence in more than ten thousand acres of property in one body, one may treat it as if it were his to travel over and hunt over as he likes. The nester is almost forgotten now by his original name. The farmer is tolerated by the cowman, and the cowman by the farmer. They adjust their necessities each with the other, and the first phases of the question are decided.

But the homesteader, the man with the family,

the man with the small holding of land, is established in the cattle country of America, and will hold his own by a law greater than State law and greater than any national law; by the inexorable law of the growth and spread of the population of the earth.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RUSTLER.

As in the Southern cattle country the nester was an enemy to the interests of the cattle trade, so on the northern range was the man who represented his exaggerated counterpart, that somewhat famous Western character known as the rustler. There has never been upon the range a character more fully discussed or less fully understood. Many persons are familiar with the curious Western verb "to rustle," and know what is meant when one is asked to "rustle a little wood" for the camp in the mountains, or when it is announced that the horses should be turned out to "rustle a little grass," etc.; but they would be unable, as indeed perhaps many resident cattle men might be unable, to give the original derivation of the term "rustler."

Any one acquainted with the cattle country of the North would soon come to hear much of the rustler, and that in stories of the most confusing character. Thus he might hear of the murder of some dweller in an outlying camp, and be informed that the crime was attributed to "rustlers." A stage-coach might be held up, or a mountain treasure train robbed, and the act would be laid at the door of this same mysterious being, the rustler. He might hear that a number of men had been the victims of a lynching

bee, and be advised that the men hung were rustlers. Thus in time he might come to believe that any and all bad characters of the West were to be called rustlers. In this he would be inaccurate and unjust. The real rustler was an operator in a more restricted field, and although it would be impossible to induce a cattle man to believe there was ever any such thing as a good rustler, it is at least true that there were sometimes two sides to the rustler's case, as there were two sides in that of the nester. In the later or acquired sense of the term, all rustlers were criminals. In the original sense of the word, no rustler was a criminal. He was simply a hard-working man, paid a little gratuity for a little extra exertion on his part. He got his name in the early Maverick days, before the present strict laws governing the handling of that inviting range product. He was then a cowboy pure and simple, and sometimes his employer gave him two, three, or five dollars for each Maverick he found and branded to the home brand. Then the cattle associations for a time paid any cowboy five dollars a head for any Maverick he found for the association. It behooved the cowboys of those days to "get out and rustle" for calves, the word being something of a synonym for the city slang word "hustle," and with no evil meaning attached to it. The term passed through some years of evolution before it gained its proper modern significance, or the improper and inaccurate use which is sometimes given it.

Under the system of Maverick gratuities the cowboy prospered on the northern range. Those were his palmy days. Any cowpuncher of active habits and a saving disposition could easily lay up considerable sums of money each year. As he was bred upon the range and understood nothing but the cow busi-

ness, it was the most natural thing in the world for him to buy a few cows and start in business for himself, sometimes while still under pay of his former employer, and sometimes quite "on his own hook." He gradually began his herd, and had his brand registered as those of the cowmen of the district. Thus he ceased to be cowboy and became cowman; or rather he remained as he really always was, both cowboy and cowman, both herder and owner. In this way many young men who went on the range "broke" began in a short time to "get ahead" very rapidly. There were few better avenues to quick fortunes than those offered by the cattle business at this stage of its growth. The logical sequel followed very rapidly. From all parts of the country all sorts of men pressed into the business. There appeared upon the range a great many men of the sort known to the old-time cowmen as "bootblack cowpunchers," men who came from the Eastern country to go into the cattle business for what money there was in it, and who were not slow to see where the quick ways of making money might be made still a little quicker. There also came into the business a great many Eastern men of wealth and standing, who were wise enough to see that the cattle business offered profits fairly Midaslike compared to the possibilities of capital in the older country. The West was now settling up rapidly along all the railroads with a good class of citizens, men of culture and refinement among them, all pressing into the new West to "grow up with the country," and to take advantage of the great opportunities of that promised land.

Under this influx of mixed population and this access of new business methods there appeared a factor never before known on the great cattle ranges—that of com-

petition. Heretofore there had always been enough for all. Now there came the stress of the multitude, and with it the dog in the manger which belongs with the ways of modern business life. By this time there began to be hundreds of new brands upon the range, and the wealthy cattle men saw some of their cowboys building up herds in competition with their own. It always grieves the heart of capital to behold a poorer man begin to make too much money. In time there was inaugurated upon the cow range the good old game of the settlements, of dog-eat-dog, and the big dog began to eat the little one. The big men met and combined against the little ones. They agreed that no more Maverick commissions should be paid, and that the cowpuncher need "rustle" no more calves for himself, but should rustle them for his employer only. Moreover, it was agreed that no cowboy should be allowed to own a brand of his own. This all happened just at the period of the passing away of the good old times of the West. It was at the beginning of the West of to-day—the humdrum, commonplace, exact, businesslike, dog-eat-dog West—which is precisely like any other part of the country now, with as much competition as any, and with as few special opportunities in business.

This blow at the welfare of the cowboy had a curious effect. It was intended to stop "rustling," but it increased it a thousandfold. It was intended to protect the herds of the big ranchers, but it came near to ruining them. It was intended to stop an honest business system, and it resulted in establishing a dishonest one. It arrayed the written law against the unwritten law which had in all the past been the governing principle of the free West. It threw down the gauntlet for that inevitable war which must be

waged between society and the individual; a conflict which can have but one end. In this case that end meant the destruction of all that free and wild character which had for a glorious generation been the distinguishing trait of a great and heroic country. Let us admit that the rustler—who now began to brand calves where he found them, Maverick or no Maverick —was a sinner against the written law, that he was a criminal, that he was the burglar, the bounds-breaker of the range; but let us not forget that he acted in many ways under the stern upholding of what seemed to him the justice of the old West. At any rate, we shall not be asked to forget him as the man who watched out the flickering breath of that dying West which not all our lamentations can now ever again bring back to life.

The rustler was a cowpuncher, and one of the best. He understood the wild trade of the range to its last detail. Among cowpunchers there were men naturally dishonest, and these turned to illegal rustling as matter of course. They were joined by the loose men of the upper country, who "were not there for their health," and who found the possibilities of the cattle system very gratifying. These took in with them, sometimes almost perforce and against their will, often at least against their convictions, some cowpunchers who were naturally as honest and loyal men as ever lived. To understand their actions one must endeavour to comprehend clearly what was really the moral code of that time and that country. This code was utterly different from that of the old communities. Under it the man who branded a few calves for himself as an act of "getting even" with the unjust rules of the large cow outfits and the big Eastern syndicates was not lowered in the least in the esteem

of his fellow-men, but, to the contrary, was regarded as a man of spirit, and therefore entitled to the rough Western respect which had no eye for him who submitted to be "imposed upon." In some portions of the upper country, notably in a few counties of Wyoming, the rustlers, or men who took beef cattle or calves not their own, far outnumbered the men opposed to them. They were called thieves and cutthroats and outlaws, and so perhaps they were from one standpoint. From their own standpoint they were not, and there were so many of them that they really made the "sovereign people," which is supposed to be the ultimate court of appeal in this country. They elected all the officers and chose the judges in some counties, and they—the people—ran things to suit themselves. It was of no use for a syndicate man to try to get in one of those courts what he called justice, because he was sure to get what the people called justice, and the two were very different things.

To this organized rallying of the "little fellows," as the small cattle owners were called, there came all sorts of hard and dissolute characters out of the chaotic population of the West. The wild frontier life had attracted men of bold nature, who had taken on all the restless and unsettled habits of the country and were irked by restraint or law of any kind. Out of such population came many of the guides and scouts, who actually were such, as well as a deplorable number of a class contemptuously called "long-hair men" by the genuine Westerner. The man who lived on the "front" had to make his living as best he could. In the time of the buffalo a large class of men went regularly into the miserable occupation of "skin hunting," and it is due to their efforts that the innumerable hosts of the American bison were destroyed from the face

of the earth. At the close of the rapid season of butchery which was thus set on foot, there were thrown upon the settlements and outlying country of the cattle range a large number of these ex-skin hunters, men of hardy nature and of exact knowledge of the wildest parts of the country. These men scattered over the country and fell into such occupations as they could find. Some of them went to punching cows, and some went to the Legislature. Some lived in out of the way corners of the land, dwelling in the dugout or cabin which was their old-time home, and making a living no one just knew how. There was a little wild game left in the country, but not in the old abundance. After awhile there swept over the country, all around the dugout of the hunter, the great herds of cattle which inundated the northern range. Was it likely that this old hunting man would go without beef?

Thus it was that the cult of the rustler grew. The ranks were filled by cowpunchers wholly bad and only partly bad, by old-time cowpunchers and new-time ones, by ex-skin hunters and drifters of the range; in short, by all sorts of men who saw in the possibilities of the cow trade a chance to make a living in a way which to them seemed either excusable, expedient, or easily capable of concealment. The qualifications for the new calling, no matter what or who the man who filled them, were simply the best ones demanded by the calling of the cowpuncher. The rustler must without fail be a rider, a roper, a sure shot, and fully posted in all the intricacies of marks and brands. He must, moreover, be a man of "nerve." In viewing him we view the criminal of the range, but an open and unaffected criminal, and we are less than broad if we fail to see the extenuating circum-

stances for his crime which existed in the conditions which then obtained. Of course, if we can not claim acquaintance with those conditions, and know only those of the old civilizations, we must call him a renegade, a thief, and often a murderer. Under those names no one can be admired.

The rustlers of the upper country rapidly joined their forces and arrived at an understanding with one another. The true story of their operations has never been written, and would make stirring reading, as indeed would a description of many of the scenes and incidents of the cowboy's life. They had in a way a creed and a dialect of their own. A genuine rustler was called a "waddy," a name difficult to trace to its origin. He might also, when spoken of in terms of admiration, be called a "pure," meaning that he was a thoroughbred, a reliable man, with "sand" and ability in his chosen profession. He was sure to be a good plainsman, and probably a "straight-up" rider—i. e., one who could ride any bucking horse without a "bucking strap" to hang on to. The rustler, and indeed pretty much everybody in his country, lived on "slow elk," which is to say that they ate yearling beef belonging to some one else, probably some big cow outfit. It was held strictly a point of honor among these men never to touch an animal belonging to a poor man or a small owner. The big non-resident cattle companies were the chief sufferers through losses of their "slow elk." Sometimes the spring freshets would carry away from the little willow-covered creek valleys the skeletons or hideless carcasses of many "slow elk." Resident managers for Eastern companies were obliged to report a lessening yearly increase among their herds, which after a while became almost a decrease. The profit was nearly

taken out of non-resident cattle ranching by the operations of the rustlers in certain unfortunate parts of the range. Sometimes the foreman of a ranch was in open or concealed sympathy with the rustlers, and very often some of the cowpunchers were friendly to them. Perhaps some of the cowboys were a "little on the rustle" themselves in a quiet way. Sometimes such a cowboy would rope and tie out at some convenient place during the day a number of calves, and would then slip out at night and brand them with his own iron or that of some confederate.

Local sympathy was all with the rustlers and against the Eastern syndicate men, and it was unpopular to be too outspoken in condemnation of the rustling operations. The small homesteader or squatter who had made an attempt at a farm on some water way out in the dry and inhospitable country might not be much of a cowman, and might not wish to mix up in any of these crooked operations of the pseudo-cowman; but if a man came into his house some morning and made him a present of a quarter of beef, or sold it to him for half a dollar, who was to be the wiser? It was difficult, and not always safe, for the small settler to refuse. If he accepted, and did so again a few times, he became tacitly recognised as bound to secrecy, and practically a friend of the rustlers. After a time another man might come along and ask permission to leave a few calves in his pasture for a few weeks, and as he did not know where the calves came from, he was perhaps not averse to accepting the pay for this, unconscious of the fact that the calves were only being made into artificial Mavericks by being weaned away from their mothers, so that no discrepancy of brands might be noticeable between the mother and her calf. Thus also some-

times the corral of a sympathizer might be used at night to hold a few calves which were being run out of the country, or a bunch of horses which were going the same way. The very corral of the ranch from which the stock was taken might serve this same purpose. It was covertly understood by the majority of the population resident upon the cattle range of this section of the country that it was not well to watch things too closely. In this sentiment many cowboys joined who did not openly join the rustlers. The honest cowboys who remained steadfast in their endeavour to protect the interests of their employers were spoken of with contempt, and were referred to as being "*peoned* out" to their employers, and were accused of "living on bacon rinds, like so many jackasses." Sometimes they were called "pliers men," or "bucket men" by ex-cowboys who would have scorned to carry a "bucket of sheep dip," or to bother too much about mending a gap in a wire fence. Thus we see an entire perversion of the original cowpuncher love of justice, and his wish to give each man his own property. Instead of being ready to hang a cow thief or shoot a horse thief, we find our cowboys over a great strip of country sympathizing or conniving with such men. Such a pronounced change of principles surely requires a pronounced reason. In point of fact, this was not a change of principles, but a change of conditions. The cowboy remained true to the West, but he felt no loyalty for the East. He was true to his old code, but he maintained that the application of that code had changed in its conditions. Slowly he was to learn the new codes, and to become the cowboy of to-day.

If anything can be said in extenuation of the rustler, it is of that rustler who in certain parts of the

range waged his fight against the big barons who, as he claimed, were oppressing the cowpunchers and depriving them of what had been a regular source of income. This was about the time of the forming of the Wyoming stock commission, and the appointment of the brand inspectors at the cattle markets, when the cattle men organized into a general State association for the purpose of protecting their interests against the lawless element. Long before that time this same question of cattle thieving had come up on the range, and under more virulent and absolutely inexcusable form. The range in Montana had been infested with cattle and horse thieves, who robbed indiscriminately all who owned property that came in their way, without show or colour of attempt at justification. These thieves lived in the out-country, each in his own cabin, and with only a very loose sort of organization, though if a visit of suspicion was made to the dugout of such a man, to see what was going on about his place, he was apt to be surly about it; and a second such visit might find him entertaining a few friends of his own, each a hard-looking man with a good gun and a clever way of using it. Long before the courts had become strong enough to be of use in meeting this outlawry, the cattle men of Montana banded together to crush it out by means of *vigilante* work. The description and abode of nearly every one of the cattle thieves were known, and a regular campaign of reform was begun, after the practical and thorough methods of that day. Some of the rustlers were asked to leave the country, and did so; and some who were thus asked to leave and did not comply, were shot or hung when next found. In this campaign the *vigilantes* killed between sixty and eighty of the rustlers. One railroad bridge one morning had thir-

teen corpses swinging to it. In the ten years from 1876 to 1886 the *vigilantes* of the range executed as many men in Montana, Dakota, and Nebraska as have been legally executed by the law in any dozen States in all the time since then. It was the only way which, in that part of the country and at that time, was practical. Capital punishment was a necessity, but jails were an impossibility, and the population had not yet had time to organize fully into the ways of the older communities. We may call these lynchings wrong also, and certainly they were as much against the law as stealing cattle was against the law; but it was here also a question of the unwritten as against the written law. It is folly to apply the standards of other times and places to the wild surroundings of that rude early population. Far better might we accord to them the right, which the American people have ever been wont to claim and take, of governing themselves according to their sense of justice under the circumstances then and there prevailing. The men of these times knew what we should always, in our efforts to be just, remember also, that circumstances alter cases. Thus these opposing interests, each lawless and each strong, fought out their battles for themselves, and so arrived at eventual justice.

The rustler in those days was never to be accused of "putting up a slow fight," or not "dying game." He was very likely to be an individual of the sort known as a "bad man with a gun." When he came to town he usually wore two guns, and "wore 'em low," as the saying went. That is to say, he carried two revolvers, each swinging low down and pretty well forward on his thighs, not on the hip in the less efficient fashion. The scabbards, or holsters, of his revolvers were attached at their bottoms to the man's

boot tops or to his trousers by buckskin thongs, so that when a sudden jerk was made for the "gun" it came out smoothly and did not pull the holster with it, the latter being held down. Nearly all the gun fighters of the time had their pistol holsters thus tied down to their clothing, even when the gun was worn concealed by the coat, well around on the hip. The usefulness of this little device can be appreciated by any one who has practised the handling of the large revolver both with and without it, and who remembers the extreme value which each little shining moment had in one of the rapid encounters of those days. Sometimes the rustler showed fight when he was cornered by the *vigilantes*, but he was usually taken at such disadvantage that he had little chance. He rarely asked any mercy, for he was a practical sort of man, and knew that it was not worth while.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," said one of them, as he was led to the fatal tree, "but I'd just like to take a chaw o' tobacco fer a few minutes before I leave." His wish was granted gravely and politely. "So long," said another, as he sprang boldly out from the end of the wagon which made the death trap for his gallows. A few of these men broke down under the memory of other days and scenes, but none of these asked any aid or pity. Some died cursing, not many died praying. They were hard, rough souls, these fellows, but among them there were some men whose splendid courage might almost have earned them a right to longer life.

The *vigilantes* of the plains rarely made any mistakes in their hurried trials and executions, and though they sometimes hung the wrong man it made little difference, because it was a part of the optimistic creed of the time that even if such a man was hung

under a mistake, he probably ought to have been hung anyhow; so it was all right. It is only in the very rarest of cases that a man who has ever engaged in a lynching will speak of it to any one, even to a man who has been of the same party with him. The act is buried with its victim. It would be in bad taste to quote any such confession even if it had been made, but the case was different, at least in the popular mind of to-day, when a man had simply acted as one of a legal posse sent out under formal process of the law to take a man, dead or alive. In either case the method of making the arrest was much the same. The practical Western mind early discovered that a man must sleep, and that in time he must wake up again; and these facts offered the suggestion for the manner of either "getting" one's fellow-citizen as a private matter, or "taking" him as a public matter. Such an arrest was once described by a cowpuncher, who had served upon a sheriff's posse for the capture of a cattle thief.

"Reddy Patterson, the sherf," said the cowpuncher, "he come to me an' he said he wanted me to go along an' help take a feller.

"'What feller?' says I.

"'Hank Ferris,' says he.

"'What fer,' says I.

"'Rustlin' cows on the Three X,' says he.

"'Oh,' says I. So I goes an' gets my Winchester, an' we all rides on over to Hank's place, about twenty miles. Feller name of Parker was along. Parker he taken up a hay ranch down clos't to town. Well, we come to Hank's house, an' tied out a way from it an' crep' into the bushes near the spring, fer we 'lowed if Hank was home he'd come out perty soon to git some water. We laid out fer a hour or more, an didn't

see no sign o' nothin', till fin'ly we see a smoke start up in the chimbly, so we know'd some one was in there, sure.

"Bimeby Hank he comes out an' walks down towarts the spring wher we was a-lyin'. I could a-got him easy, but Reddy he holds me back, an' when Hank gets down clos't to us, Reddy steps out an' tells him to get up his hands. Hank he looks at him, an' don't put up his hands at first, an' yet so far as we could see he didn't have on no gun. I reckon he was plenty mad. Reddy he calls to him to get up his hands quick, and Hank puts 'em up then, though all the time he kep' a-backin' towarts the house. We all stood out and was goin' up to him then, thinkin' he might get some edge onto us, but jest as we got a'most up to Hank, blamed ef there didn't another feller run out of the house an' start to go 'round the corner. Parker he blazes away at this feller without no orders, an' blame ef he didn't get him, too!

"'What in hell you shootin' at?' says Reddy, who ain't give no orders. An' says Hank, 'D—d ef you ain't killed that feller! What'd you do it fer?'

"We all went to the other feller, an' he wasn't dead, only shot through the shoulder, an' he was mighty mad about it.

"'My frien',' says Reddy, 'who are you an' what you doin' yer?'

"'My name's Hanson,' says he. 'Who in hell are you?'

"'My name's Patterson,' says Reddy. 'I'm sherf o' this county. What made you run?'

"'I 'lowed it wuzn't safe,' says the feller.

"'It ain't,' says Reddy, 'er not always. Where'd you come from?'

"'Cheyann,' says he. 'I never was in yer before in my life. I wuz just visitin' Hank.'

"'Is that so, Hank?' says Reddy.

"'Sure,' says Hank. 'That feller ain't done no rustlin'. D—n perty thing, you comin' an' shootin' him!'

"Reddy he thinks a while, and he says to the feller: 'Well, pardner, I reckon we was mistook about you, an' I ain't got no warrant fer you nohow. I'm mighty sorry we shot you.'

"'That's so,' says the feller. 'It don't look quite right.'

"Then Reddy says to Parker, 'Parker, I reckon you better go on up to town ahead of us.—You mustn't mind him,' he says to the feller, meanin' he mustn't mind Parker. 'He's jest a leetle nervous, er he wouldn't a-shot you at all. I didn't tell him to, and I'm mighty sorry he done it, too.'

"That feller Reddy Patterson, he's shore a plum white man," said the cowpuncher in conclusion. "He don't mean wrong to no man."

The lawless life of the rustler, and the opportunities it offered for the easy and rapid accumulation of property, attracted many uneasy and loose-principled men from different parts of the country. Some of the men publicly known to belong to the rustlers in the Wyoming factional troubles of less than a decade ago were men who had respectable ranch properties. They had good cottonwood log-houses built, with permanent improvements, corrals, etc., just as the legitimate cowmen had. They had good herds begun, principally without the trouble of buying any cattle at the start. One of them was thought to be worth seventy thousand dollars, and had a herd of several hundred head of good horses, some of them as fleet as "ever looked through a bridle"; for it was well for the rustler to own fast horses. This man was "doing

well," when he was shot and hung one day by unknown parties, his body not being discovered until some time later. Tom W—— will do for the name of this man. "Stalker Smith" will come near enough to the name of another successful man in this line of business; for now we come down to times less than half a decade old, and could easily touch upon some very tender memories, which may as well be left untroubled. The team of Stalker Smith came home one day, and in the wagon was the driver, shot through the neck and dead. No one ever knew who did it.

The successes of some of these rustlers, and the general sympathy in which rustler principles were held, offered temptation to many ambitious young men to go into the same business, in spite of the risk of it. In the Big Horn country of Wyoming it was for a time a toss up when a new cowboy came on the range whether he would go in with the cowmen or join the rustlers. Sometimes the new man had sudden occasion to regret his departure from the strict ways of rectitude. One recalls one such instance which was especially sad. There was a young cowpuncher who came up from Kansas and became fascinated with the sort of cowpunching he found going on in his adopted country, a trade in which it was not necessary to have any capital to get cattle, or even any iron to own them. He fell in with two men whom we may call Jimmy and Spoke for short, these at least being names which will serve the purpose. These men told him that they were engaged in a very risky occupation, and did not encourage him to go in with them, but the new cowpuncher insisted that he wanted to be as bad a man as anybody, and was bound to try this new way of getting along rapidly in the cattle business. The result was that the three went out one day

after "slow elk," and shot down half a dozen cattle in a little hollow, where they thought they would not be observed by the ranchers' men. Their confidence in this latter belief was ill-placed, for they had not half finished the skinning of their illegal beef before they were surprised by a party of cattle men and officers, who rose up from the edge of the hill above them and ordered them to throw up their hands. Instead of doing this, all the rustlers threw themselves flat on the ground, each behind the carcass of an animal. The oldest of the three ordered the others to lie close and not to show a head until they got an idea of what to do, but the Kansas cowpuncher could not get the better of his curiosity. He stuck up his head over the back of his dead cow, and was at once shot square through the forehead and instantly killed. Thus ended his aspirations as a rustler on the very first day that he went out.

Spoke jumped to his feet to run to his horse, pulling at his revolver as he rose. He was shot through the right wrist and his pistol dropped. He picked it up in his left hand and was shot through that wrist as he ran. He and Jimmy none the less got to their horses, but Jimmy's horse was shot down just as he sought to mount. Spoke turned to him and said, "Here, Jimmy, take my horse. I'm shot so I can't ride anyhow, and we can't both get away. You get on and ride, and keep on a-ridin'." So Jimmy took his comrade's horse and rode away under fire. His mount was a grand one, and in less than thirty-six hours he was a hundred and twenty-five miles away, and never has been caught yet. His plucky fellow-rustler was captured, tried, and imprisoned, but it is enough to say that he did not remain in prison very long and is to-day a free man. In regard to the

location of this rude little drama, which did not occur so very long ago, it will do to say in the rustler vernacular that it happened "where the winds come from.".

As there is but an inaccurate popular knowledge in regard to the character of the rustler himself, still less exact is the understanding in regard to his occupation and the manner in which he carried it on. Indeed, perhaps there are not a few experienced cattle men whose mode of life has not made them familiar with all the tricks of the rustler's trade. Really the rustler needed to be the most expert of all cow handlers, for he had to deceive the most expert of the legitimate followers of the trade, and was forced to outwit, outride, and outbrand—sometimes even to outshoot—the cowmen who had perhaps been in the business all their lives. He needed to know the range brands thoroughly, and to know the manner in which they could most successfully be changed without detection.

It might be supposed, for instance, that the branding iron of the rustler was simply a straight "running iron," with which he wrote over the former brand on an animal his own brand; or it might be supposed that he simply impressed his own hot stencil upon the hide of the creature, thus blotting out the original brand. This would be very clumsy work, apt to be easily detected by the nature of the wound left upon the hide of the creature, which would in such a case often slough off and leave visible proof that there had been tampering with the brand. The rustler who was a past master in his art was very fond of a bit of hay wire, or better yet, of telegraph wire, as a branding tool. This could be folded up and put in the pocket, so it could be easily carried without much chance of

detection. Upon occasion, it could be twisted into the form of almost any of the set brands of the district, or made into shapes which would cunningly alter such original brands, and yet leave no trace of the original by which it could be proved. It should be borne in mind that the rustler was branding after the round-up in some cases, and it would not do for him to claim a calf showing a sloughed-off brand at a date when all calves were fairly to be supposed well of their spring branding and with the hair clearly showing the mark of the brand wound. After the rustler had used his bit of wire, the whole altered brand had the appearance of having been a genuine brand and all made at the same time. The fresh burn fitted in with the older and heavier burning in such way that it was impossible to tell legally that there had ever been any attempt at change—at least it was legally impossible to do so in any of the courts sitting in rustlerdom!

Another favourite way of easing down a brand was by means of branding through a wet blanket. The heavy iron could then be used, and yet the wound would not be so severe as to "give the thing away," as the saying of the range ran. Experts were divided as to the merits of these two methods of blotting brands, but the easily concealed hay wire had its advantages. It was so easy to pull a bit of crooked wire out of the pocket, heat it red hot, and by simply laying it upon a given point of the calf's hide acquire title to that calf, which alone would represent a pretty fair day's work for a poor man.

There were different ways in which the rustler operated. He might be rustling calves for his own ranch, or he might be rustling beef for the markets, and he might work a little differently at different

times in either specialty. Of course he had always to overcome that great unerring instinct by which the cow and her calf always kept together for nearly a year of the calf's life, an instinct which has been explained as a part of the whole foundation of the cattle business. The rustler must separate these two in order to get the calf. Sometimes he shot down the cow, and simply took away the calf with him, branding it as his own. This might be before the round-up or after it, and the calf might be already branded or not branded. Or he might make up a bunch of calves and hold them in corrals or pastures away from their mothers, and so finally drive them away to another part of the range, these calves either branded or not branded as the case might be.

If the rustler wanted any beef, he simply shot down any animal he fancied and skinned it, carrying away the meat. As he might not care to have the incriminating hide found in his keeping, with its tell-tale brand to speak against him, he might burn up or destroy the hide or throw it away where it might not be found. It was a very big and wild country, and not many persons would be apt to cross his trail in the course of a day or a week.

It was not considered any crime at all for the residents of the country to kill what beef they wanted for their own use, provided it was beef that belonged to the big cattle companies. But the rustlers were not content with this. They wanted to do a little more than live. So they began to regularly market this free beef. A great many of the butcher shops in the ragged little frontier towns would take all the risk of handling such beef, especially if this happened to be in one of the recognised rustler towns, where a trial involving the title to beef always went one way, and

that not in favour of a non-resident or a big cattle company.

Under these conditions the rustler was able to make a living and a little more than a living, and had not much cause to complain; or as he would probably have phrased it, he "had no kick coming." But presently there appeared upon his horizon a change of condition which offered him a still better chance to get on in the world, and gave his occupation a veritable "boom." Across the cattle range of Nebraska and Wyoming came the advancing arm of a railroad, the C. B. & Q. extension into Montana. The camps of the railroad contractors, where hundreds of men were employed and had to be fed, made a most enticing market, one right at the door of the rustler, a most accommodating and pleasant thing to have occur. The rustler was a boon to the railroad camps, and the latter were a boon to him. At once a fine traffic sprung up in free beef, and whole communities were benefitted by the new line of trade. In some way or other the rustler always managed to part with what money he made, and rarely became a very successful business man, but during the railroad days a number of the rustlers got hold of considerable amounts of money. It was all so very simple. Here were the cattle. Here was the market. There was no complicated system of round-ups and drives and shipping and inspecting, and, best of all, a man did not need any money to go into business. All he required was a rifle and a wagon. It was no wonder that under so flattering a prospect a great many men went in with the clans of the resident rustlers. The result was so wholesale a stealing of the range cattle of non-residents and of large resident outfits that the industry of cattle raising received a terrible blow. All the

profits of the ranches were going into the hands of the rustlers, and the herds instead of increasing were standing still or decreasing. Of course, this state of affairs could not long prevail, and there ensued the determined fight upon the rustlers which resulted ultimately in the breaking up of their practices, or reducing them to an endurable extent.

It may be curious information to some to learn the exact manner in which brands were changed by these light-fingered persons, so that one brand was made into another without leaving proof behind it of the change. We now come upon a delicate field, as the rustling operations in consideration all transpired within a few years back, and a great many of the men who assisted in them might not like to have their names and signs manual appear in print. It is not alleged that any or all of the brands given herein are actual or genuine, or that the alterations shown were ever actually made by any persons, and no accuracy is claimed for the names of the different brands mentioned. They are simply given, as the "retired rustler" who reviewed them remarked, to "show the possibilities of the cow business in a good climate." There may or may not be certain cattle men or certain ex-rustlers who might recognise some of the brands shown, but these no doubt would understand the motive to be simply one of accurate explanation of the subject in general and not in particular.

Thus, we may say, one of the first brands to appear on the upper ranges after the first Southern drives was the old **IO** brand. Numbers of cattle men bought cattle of that brand to stock their ranges, and, of course, needed to rebrand the cattle. It was an easy thing to think of the **IOI** brand, and this was one of the largest outfits on the range. But let us suppose a

rustler wanted to brand one of the **10** cows for his own private purposes. He simply took his little iron or wire, and put a little top to the figure 1, making it into a 7. It then appeared thus: **70**—quite a different thing! Still more different was it written with a letter S after it, thus: **70S**. The owner would not recognise his own cow thus disguised. Neither could the owner of a **101** cow very well prove his property when he found it wearing a brand which said **701**. The matter would be still more difficult by the time the next rustler had made it **70L**, and the original **10** cow would be very difficult to recognise under the evolved brand **ЯOB**. It should be borne in mind that the brand mark as it actually shows upon the hide is not so sharp and clearly defined as it looks upon paper.

There was a brand known upon the range as the Wrench brand, thus: **)—(**. By the time the rustler was done with it it appeared thus: **O—O**. Or it might assume this form, **O—O**, and be called the Bridle-bit brand. The brand **21** was easily made to read **26**. Without much trouble **999** could appear quite differently, as **888**. The hair of the cow would cover up any little defects of penmanship.

A brand which was a simple **V** was easily altered, as thus: **⋀**; but the skilful rustler would have been wise enough to put a straight line across it, thus: **⋀** covering up the junction mark of the two brands. Of the old brand with the curious name of the Wallop, **X**, there might possibly have been constructed the brand appearing **8**.

The man who invented the Pipe-bowl brand, , had reason to believe he had a good brand till he saw it written thus: ; and then thus: . The originator of the following brand, , was contented with it until he saw it changed into the , and called the "Fiddle-back" brand. Bar T, written , was readily made into ; and finally it might have appeared thus: .

The open A U was written thus: ; but it came to pass that a brand appeared on the range which read thus: —quite a different thing! Another reading of the might be . The L brand might become the Block brand, thus: . The brand might have a second story put underneath it, and so become . A gentleman by name of Kid A—— is said to have discovered that the DHL brand, , looked better thus: . The brand was very pretty when made into the Tin-cup brand, thus: . The Bar-ll-Bar ( ) brand was much improved in the estimation of some by being inscribed , under which form it was called the Hog-pen brand. The owner of it is said to have gone over the divide. The brand might be pleasant as reminding some Eastern cattle man of the year he went into the cattle business. A few years later he might be looking for some cows marked in that way, and would not know them when he saw them, for they might be marked . Or they might also be marked . The brand originally made thus, , was easily made into the Wheel brand, thus: . The original brand

could have been changed to , and then into . It is not stated that any such change ever was made, but it might have been made along with any of the above. The letter S, alone or in combinations, was one of the hardest brands for the rustler to change successfully.

But perhaps the best instance of the brand-blotter's or "brand-blotcher's" art, one which shows alike his ingenuity and his grim sense of humour, was the alteration of the brand of the Liverpool and Suffolk Cattle Company, a wealthy English corporation who went into business in Wyoming with a view to gaining American money and American experience. The latter they actually got. The brand of this company was known as the "Guinea brand," in token, perhaps, of the many guineas of profits which were to flow into the company's coffers. It was written thus on the recorder's books: . But some of the cattle of the English company changed their guinea stamp. The cow was the cow for a' that; but it bore the mark of the good old American dollar, and was called the property of the "Dollar brand," whose sign was thus: . This was something which the Englishmen could not understand for a long time.

Reference to the cuts will show the process of evolution of some of the rustler brands, and will afford a clear idea of the means by which the intention of the old-time identification marks of the cow trade was perverted by dishonest individuals. Of course this was all a serious injury to the legitimate trade—indeed, a blow at its fundamental principles and a contravention of the original principle of justice among cowmen. Those

of the ranchmen who were suffering, together with those who were opposed to all such dishonest methods, soon joined forces to crush out this growing evil, which must else have put an end to the cattle trade. The whole sanctity of the brand was going, and there was danger that the idea of its integrity as a sign of ownership would lose alike legal and popular value. The height of these depredations was reached at a time well within modern days and modern methods; none the less the law of force was invoked, as well as the law of the land, and this upon both sides. Two or three ranch foremen who remained loyal to their employers' interests were forced to leave the country, and one or two others were killed outright by the rustlers. Several non-resident cattle men found it unsafe to live upon their ranches, and so returned to their homes in the States. Upon the other hand, a few of the rustlers were killed, and many were warned or threatened. Finally came the climax of affairs, which ultimately resulted in the waning of the star of the rustler and the general establishment upon the range of those principles of justice which were agreed upon by all as best for the interests of all. The cattle associations attained the practical control of the cattle business. Cattle men held the most responsible positions of public life, and were acknowledged to be among the most important citizens of the State, and to represent the State's most considerable industry. Since then the cattle business has become one of business methods and high organization.

The rustlers were wrong. They were lawless men—refugees and outlaws many of them. Yet there is a certain picturesqueness in their story, intimately blended as it is with the story of the cattle trade and of the cowboy, a romantic interest which we should not over-

look. It was the rustler who held the last pinnacle in the fight for the old days and the old ways of the West.

Since his fight was doomed of necessity to be a losing one, let us at least endeavour to be just to him. He was the burglar of the range; but, unlike the burglar of the cities, he very often thought that he was justified in what he did by the precedents of his country. When he came to see and to believe that he was wrong, he in many cases reformed and never again went back to the old ways. There should be no stigma allowed to rest upon the name of as honest and hard-working a class of men as any of the country, and so there should be no confusing of the rustler with the cowboy; yet it is none the less true that some of the most skilful and most trusted men now engaged in punching cows upon the range are men who at one time were "a little on the rustle," and who are by no means anxious to cover up their past. Nor is their past a barrier to them, even in these days, in the open-hearted country of the range.

CHAPTER XVI.

WARS OF THE RANGE.

At times there have been wars upon the cattle range—conflicts between armed bodies of men of such numbers as to lift the matter above the field of mere personal encounters. These wars occurred when the interests of one class of men interfered with those of another. They might be classed as wars between sheepmen and cattle men, between factions of cattle men, or between the cattle men and rustlers or cattle thieves. In all these affairs the cowpuncher was the private soldier, the rank and file of the firing line, so essential in any fighting. In his capacity as armed retainer we shall see him in yet another light.

Of these three great sources of armed interferences, the difference of interests between sheep men and cattle men is the one which has attracted the least attention, but which is the most serious of all. This is a war not only of men, but of conditions. The sheep are bound to drive out the cattle from much of the range held by them to-day. This range is limited and is growing less. It will be cut into more and more by farmers and by irrigation, and on such part of the wild range as is left the sheep have as good right to the free grass as have the cattle. As they can live on less, and as they destroy the life of the range for cattle as they pass over it, it is sure they will have the best of

the final argument. The cattle men resent this thought even to-day. What must have been their feelings in the early days, when the idea was first presented to them? One may readily find the answer when he considers the customs and precedents which then obtained. The great remedy for trouble in those days was the gun.

When the great herds of sheep were heard of as approaching over the feeding grounds of a certain district, the cowmen hurriedly met and took action. A delegation was sent to the men in charge of the sheep bands, warning them to come no further. If the sheep outfit felt strong enough, which was rarely the case, it sent back its defiance, and said that it would walk its sheep over any part of the free earth that seemed most convenient. The cowmen then sent to town for extra ammunition.

As the sheep worked in over the country, passing sometimes over high and dry mountain plateaus and across the rocky foothills, the herds were watched constantly by the cowboys of the nearer ranch outfits. The solitary sheep herder, sitting with head downcast on some mountain side, might hear the sing of a bullet. His own rifle, rusted and full of grass and sand, might fail him even if he tried to use it. He might take the hint, or again receive the final hint, and indeed go "over the range," never more to return. The sheep, sometimes driven by the cowboys into some box cañon or defile, were butchered in hundreds and thousands. One sheep outfit, if memory serves correctly, lost nearly four thousand sheep one afternoon in a little cañon where they were crowded up, their bodies being left where they were shot down and their attendants driven out of the country. The law of might was the only one held in respect in those days. The general

consensus of opinion was that no man engaged in walking sheep could be a decent citizen. He was a low down, miserable being, whom it was quite correct to terrify or kill. A popular contempt was entertained for "sheep meat," and any one addicted to the habit of eating it was considered of degenerate tendency. The little cow town hotel at times served this meat on its tables, but the very waiter girls had scorn in their voices when they called to the cook through the kitchen window their order for a "plate of sheep."

Of all the wars of the range, the greatest and bloodiest was the Lincoln County war of New Mexico, a mere factional war, in which there was no principle at stake, and no motive except the desire of robbery and personal revenge. This bloody partisan contest was carried on at a time before the modern ways of gathering news had penetrated so far as the remote country which was the scene of the disturbances. Did that country remain to-day as wild and unsettled as it was then, and as far from railroad and telegraphic communications, the best of the newspapers of to-day might have no inkling of equal sensations occurring there until weeks or months after they had happened. Europe, Turkey, the Soudan, are not so far as was, about the year 1880, the little-known country between the Rio Grande and the Pecos River. The Lincoln County war raged for a couple of years or more in spasmodic virulence, until the whole cattle community was ranged in factions, one half against the other, and each man doubtful of his neighbour. It was supposed that this war resulted in the death of two or three hundred men, but no one will ever really know how many men were killed in this guerilla fighting, until the tally-book of the recording angel shows how many skeletons are lying out in the mountains of that calm

Southwestern country, where even to-day the deer hunter may find a human skull, or the scattered members of some disjointed thing whose nature he perhaps fails to recognise. Yet recent as was the occurrence of these terrible events, they are already shrouded in apathy and buried in forgetfulness. The public never knew of this war, and does not know of it to-day. The newspapers of the cities never got hold of the facts in any actual accurate state. Most of the men of the country did not care to write or tell all they knew. The greatest war of the range has passed into the oblivion which broods above the cattle country. Yet were the book of this little drama written, it would be in its way a series of hero tales, full of the bravery and determination, the faithfulness and hardihood of many; of the fiendish cruelty, the lust of blood, the insatiable vindictiveness of others. Human life was never cheaper than in the Spanish Southwest. In this time of outbreak it seemed that all the smouldering passions of generations, all the uncentred hate, the misgrown mentality, the distorted love of blood, and the reckless love of danger for its own morbid pleasure had accumulated and broken forth in a volcano of blood and crime. The only society was one of armed conflict, the only fellowship was that of mutual danger or mutual criminality. There were no law courts in the region at the time fit to bear such name, and such as there were remained helpless. The Territorial authorities were no less helpless. The Governor of the Territory was disposed to quell the disturbance, and it is related of him that in pursuance of his military training he intended to send troops and cannon down into the desert to fight these cowboys, though this perhaps was related with a bit of the grim humour of the times. Prices were put on the heads of some of the most dangerous men,

and then for years the merry chase of man-hunting went on until most of the gangs were broken up. Many of the men were killed, and those remaining alive dispersed into Old Mexico. During the prevalence of the war the whole country had been terrorized by continual scenes of violence and death, and so indiscriminate had been the murderous spirit of the worst of the outlaws engaged in this fighting that no man knew when he was safe from some one or other of the many gangs which infested the country.

The cause of this great war lay primarily in the loose state of society at the time. Far down in the Seven Rivers country, at the lower portion of the Pecos Valley, was the ranch of old John Chisholm, who had ventured in there when few other men had dared to try the country. He had become very wealthy. That was the day of Mavericks, and as the country was very wild and unknown—perhaps it is less known to-day than any country of equal size in the United States—the Chisholm herd soon grew to number anywhere from thirty to sixty thousand, and Chisholm and his brother lived the lives of veritable cattle kings. Under them at times were large numbers of cowboys, and among these were some of the hardest men that ever threw a leg over a saddle, as indeed they had need to be.

The whole region was full of horse thieves and outlaws, the worst of these being under the leadership of the notorious cutthroat, Billy the Kid, a name famous even yet along that border. Billy the Kid died at the ripe age of twenty-three, and at that time had killed twenty-three men, committing his first murder when he was but fourteen years of age. He and his men inaugurated a reign of terror, which made his name a dread from one end of the country to the other.

They lived on their earnings as robbers, and glad enough were the Mexicans of the remote *placitas* to give them anything they asked in return for life. This young fiend and his gang at one time shot down in cold blood a party of seven Mexicans whom they found encamped at a water hole, declaring later that they did this "just to see them kick." Twice captured by the bold officers sent after him, the Kid escaped, in the last instance killing his two guards in the county jail, and then openly parading on the platform before the court house for half an hour before he deigned to move off upon a horse which he took from a passer-by.

The gang of the Kid made a practice of raiding the little white settlements then just coming into the country, and each such raid was apt to mean a life or two. Once they thus visited the village of White Oaks, and at night amused themselves by shooting at the lights in the windows of the houses. It chanced that there was a family living in one of the houses among whom were some women, almost the first that had ever come to the camp. The stern men of the frontier might pass over the shooting at their own windows, but they would brook no ill treatment of the women of the community. A band of pursuers was made up, and the Kid was besieged at a ranch house some miles north of White Oaks. The self-appointed leader of the pursuers went into the house with a flag of truce and was detained there. Later he tried to escape from the house and was shot down by the Kid as he ran, this breaking up the siege with Billy still in possession of his fortifications. It seemed that the Kid would never be killed or taken, and he and his men became more and more daring and outrageous. Yet it is a curious fact, showing well the condition of the society of the times, that the Kid was perfectly well

known by nearly everybody living in the country, and had many warm friends and adherents. A great many others entertained him when he called, and professed for him a friendship which they did not feel, but dared not deny. If a man was suspected by the Kid as apt to convey undesirable news to undesirable parties, the Kid never made any accusations, asked any questions, or waited for any denials. He simply shot the man, laughed about it, and rode on. A wilder or more lawless part of the earth never lay out of doors than this portion of New Mexico at this time.

It was the habit of these gangs of the Kid's people to make a living from the country in the easiest way possible. Some of them knew all about the Chisholm outfit, and it seems to have been agreed among them that it would be a desirable thing to kill the owners of the ranch, take possession of the property, and settle down to being cattle kings themselves, counting upon the remoteness and untravelled nature of the country to protect them in this crime, as it had in hundreds of others. There may have been some disagreements over Maverick matters and that sort of thing which never came to light, but the conclusion on the part of the gang was to make a wholesale killing and stealing.

There was one obstacle to the carrying out of this little plan of taking the Chisholm herds and killing John Chisholm, and that was the objection John Chisholm had to both phases of the proposition. Instead of submitting or running, he sent out word and in a short time had about him as good a little army of fighting men as ever got together. These men were paid about five dollars a day apiece, and had arms and ammunition furnished them. In a short time there were practically two armies scattered about over the country looking for somebody to kill. As neither party had

any uniform or distinguishing mark, it was difficult for a man to tell his friends from his foes. When two parties of these armed riders met, it was known there must be a statement as to sides, for all the country was forced to take one side or the other. The wayfarer who saw a body of men approaching was obliged to guess, and guess very quickly, which side he favoured. If he guessed wrong, the coyotes had another meal. The victim was left lying where he fell. The mountains were full of dead men, and each camping place by the infrequent water holes had its tale of blood and horror. One man after another was killed thus by men of one side or the other, sometimes men who were entirely innocent of any connection with the trouble in hand. If a paid fighter was killed, another man was hired to take his place.

Neither faction knew how many men the other had arrayed against it, nor did it care, for there was no regular force on either side and no general meetings of the opposing clans, the little straggling bands of fighters being scattered about as the case might be, not only near the Chisholm ranches, but over the whole of a county which is as large as the State of Pennsylvania. At one time there was a sort of pitched battle waged at the county seat of Lincoln County, and some of the Kid's men "holed up" in a 'dobe house until driven out by fire, meantime making deadly rifle practice upon any of the enemy who chanced to show a head anywhere along the street of the tiny 'dobe town. Upon the hillside back of the courthouse one of the opposing force attempted to run to the cover of a big rock, from which he could command the windows of the 'dobe fortress of the Kid's men. As he ran there spoke a heavy buffalo gun from the window, and he fell shot through the back

at four hundred yards. He was not killed at once, and lay upon the hillside all the rest of the afternoon waving his hand for help, but no one dared go near him; and there he died, one of the cowboy victims of this war—a death inglorious enough, but met in pursuance of what the poor fellow thought was his duty.

Many were the stories of the bloody incidents of the Lincoln County war one heard upon the scenes of their happening and within the year or so following their occurrence, but it would be sickening to tell the full details of this great feud, or enter into the long story of its history of open or secret assassinations. It is enough to say that the outlaws who were at the bottom of it were gradually defeated. The officers of the land were as brave men as ever lived, and they never ceased in their killing or capturing until they themselves were killed, and then their deputies took up the work. Prices were put on the heads of the leaders, and this made traitors of many of the men, all the arts of State's evidence and the like being employed by the courts, now gradually becoming stronger in the country. Gradually the war died away in a series of personal feuds, which resulted in many killings years later. Some of the hired fighting men left the country when it began to get too hot for them, and some of these may be living now on the Northern cow ranges, not telling all the things they know about the past. Indictments were out for many men who never had service of warrant made on them.

Pat Garrett, the man who had been elected sheriff for the express purpose of killing Billy the Kid, and who had sent word to him that one or the other of them must be killed—to which Billy gave a cordial assent—finally got track of the little ruffian just as he

was about to leave the country for Mexico. It was reported that Billy was to call at night at a certain ranch to say good-bye to his sweetheart, a Mexican *señorita*, and Pat Garrett went to the house and secreted himself behind the bed of the ranch owner in the room nearest the entrance. After dark Billy came to the house, passing two of Garrett's men half suspiciously as they sat on the ground outside the door. He apparently was about to repent of having violated his customary rule of shooting first and inquiring afterward, and had pulled his gun from the scabbard and was looking out at the men as he came backing into the door, with his boots in one hand. Garrett saw and recognised him, and at once shot and killed him; none too quick, for Billy heard him as he rose from behind the bed, holding the scared ranchman down with one arm as he fired. Billy turned swiftly about and made a quick but ineffectual shot, for he was dead even as he fired. Pat Garrett to-day is a respected ranchman, as pleasant a man as one would ask to meet. All that country now is trying to forget its earlier history, and little is ever done to diminish the general ignorance in regard to the most serious and most bloody factional war ever known upon the cattle range.

The last of the important cattle wars was the somewhat famous "rustler war" of 1892, in which a campaign was made by the cattle men of Wyoming against the rustlers of Johnson County, Wyoming. This "war" was not without its opera-bouffe aspects, though it was ventilated for each day for over three weeks in the daily press, and heralded to the corners of the world. It was very much an affair of going after rustlers with a brass band, and it did not result so successfully as was hoped by the leaders of the pro-

ject. Only two men were killed in this "war," yet the matter attracted far more attention than any similar clash that ever occurred in the cattle country. This was simply because of the newspaper notoriety it had. An old cowman covered the case perfectly when he said: "There might be twenty-five men killed each day down in Lincoln County in the old times, and it wouldn't make half the stir that is made nowadays if one man shoots at another in Wyoming. The newspapers make all the difference." The full force of such a remark can never be felt unless it has been one's fortune to live, at some time or other in his life, in a country where there were no newspapers and no law. He is then back at the beginning of the world, antedating civilization, and in a position to see the crude and grim forces underlying this human nature which pretends later to compose itself with the ways of society, but which has really a snarl and a claw not far away.

The newspaper accounts of the rustler war of 1892 were in many respects incorrect, the despatches coming from Buffalo, in Johnson County, the seat of the rustler element, being entirely contradictory to those emanating from Cheyenne, the headquarters of the big cowmen concerned in the raid. One gathers his beliefs in regard to the situation not from the newspaper accounts, but from thorough review of the matter upon one hand with a cowman who was one of the participants in the raid, and upon the other hand with some rustlers who were at Buffalo and thoroughly concerned in all the incidents which occurred on that side of the "war."

For a long time the rustlers had been making life a burden to the legitimate cowmen of the counties of Johnson, Natrona, and Converse, until they had nearly

brought to a standstill all the proper operations of the cattle industry. Before the establishment of the live stock commission and the brand inspectors, it was impossible for a ranchman to tell whether he was going to come out at the end of the year with any cattle left or not. Practically the whole country was living on stolen beef, and not content with this and with serving notice on the cattle companies that they would no longer be allowed to hold their round-ups, the rustlers began to ship beef by car-load lots to the markets of the East. As there were no brand inspectors there to detect the fraudulent nature of such shipments, there was imminent danger that the illegal cattle men would entirely ruin the legal ones. The extent of the losses suffered by the cattle men may be inferred from the fact that within the first year after the appointment of the brand inspectors at the markets they sent back to the commissioners of the State $127,000 of "estray money" on cattle passing to market from the Wyoming range. The commissioners found proper ownership for all but $14,000 of this, but refused some of the funds to rustlers who openly claimed dues therein. This appearance of the action of the new cattle laws was extremely unsatisfactory to the rustlers, and it resulted in a practical solidification of the various rustler factions, and made of the county of Johnson a rustler settlement, where the cattle men had no voice. In four years the cattle men brought one hundred and eighty suits in Johnson County against rustlers for stealing beef or calves, but no jury could be found which would convict a man, and the only case in which a rustler was ever punished was one in which a thief had killed a cow and taken home a quarter of the beef, for which he was convicted of petty larceny and assessed the value of the beef, about eighteen dollars.

The rustlers posed as small stockmen, and did all they could to array the interests of the actual small stockmen against those of the "barons," or ranch capitalists, claiming that the fight was one of wealth against men in moderate circumstances, and asserting that as to the methods practised in acquiring cattle, the big ranchmen were no better than they should be. In this latter statement there was colour of truth in many instances, for the fortune of more than one man engaged in the raid against the rustlers was more than probably laid in the early and active efforts of their foremen with the branding iron. When such foremen sought to carry on the old methods for themselves which they had practised for their employers, the latter made objection, feeling that there had been a change in the former relations of *meum* and *tuum*. There is large undercurrent of unwritten history on both sides of the question in this rustler war. Be that as it may, there was much bitterness felt on both sides, and no doubt both sides thought they had some partial justification in many things which they did or attempted to do.

Early in the spring of 1892 a number of the large cattle owners met at Cheyenne and resolved upon a general raid against the rustlers, they having the names of about one hundred and twenty-five men whom they claimed to know were engaged in the rustling business, some thirty-five of whom they agreed among themselves either to kill or drive out of the country. In this movement to invoke the old-time ways of the range were several men prominent in State affairs, a member of the Legislature, a member of the stock commission, and some two dozen wealthy cattle men, several of whom were practically non-resident Easterners who had large holdings of cattle in Wyoming.

There never was a more select, or a more inefficient, lynching party started out across the plains. Nearly all the cowmen of the movement were men of culture and refinement. Two Harvard graduates were among the outfit. There was a young Englishman along to see the fun—which he saw—and all in all the gathering was, socially speaking, everything that could be asked. It was incidentally remarked in one of the newspaper reports that one of the select lynchers while asleep in camp one day chanced to toss out his hand over his blankets, thus displaying two large diamond rings which he wore as part of his range costume. It is not justly to be said of these men that they were not brave and determined, and it probably never occurred to them that they would fail of carrying out their programme as arranged in detail without experiencing any great hindrance on the part of the men they were intending to hang, shoot, or drive out of the country. They had read of such things being done, and agreed that it was desirable they should do some of those things for themselves. That one of their number who tells this story of the raid admits frankly that they made a great mistake. They were all new at that sort of business, Eastern men who had not been reared in the hard school of the old times, and who, while they might have been fit for privates in such an enterprise, were absolutely unfit for leaders; in which latter capacity there seems to have been a general willingness to serve. The men who should have been in charge were the men who were hired by the day to serve as privates—twenty fighting Texans, cowpunchers from the lower range, who were imported for this purpose and paid five dollars a day and expenses to go along and see or assist in the hanging, shooting, and driving out. Had the leader of the cow-

boys been the leader of the party, the result might have been, at least in some respects, different; for here was a man with followers who, though they had not accumulated enough funds to afford to wear diamond rings when going to a lynching, had none the less served in the rude apprenticeship of Western life on the plains, and knew far more about partisan campaigning than all the men who acted as the leaders of this raid.

The party as finally organized numbered forty-three men, including the twenty Texans, and their outfit was as perfect as money could buy. They had three wagons and plenty of cooks, and evidently intended to travel in perfect comfort. Secretly embarking their outfit on a train at Cheyenne at night, early in April, 1892, they went by rail to Casper, Wyoming, arriving there the following night. Thence they started with their horses and wagons overland across the wild country, something like one hundred and thirty miles, which lay between them and the seat of war. The first serious business of the expedition was at the K. C. ranch, occupied by two well-known rustlers, Nate Champion and Nick Ray. The raiders held up this ranch at daybreak, and early in the morning took prisoners two freighters who happened to be stopping at the house, and who came out of the house to go toward the barn. The house was then surrounded by a firing party of twelve men, it being supposed that Champion and Ray would soon miss the other men and come out to see what had become of them. Presently one of the rustlers, Ray, stepped to the door, and at once fell under the rifle fire of the men who lay concealed and waiting for him. The participants in this raid are very reticent in regard to the names of those who did any shooting, but one of the freighters taken prisoner

afterward said that it was a smooth-faced boy, one of the Texas fighters, who took the first hurried aim and shot Ray down. Ray was shot again as he crawled back into the house. The other rustler, Champion, remained game till the last and refused to come out, keeping up his fire upon his besiegers whenever opportunity offered. Champion was finally driven out by means of fire. A wagon load of hay was pushed up against the ranch house and set on fire, so that the cabin was burned over the head of the rustler defending it. The body of Ray was later found burned and charred.

When the heat became too much for him, Champion ran from the burning house, endeavouring to reach a little gully near by. He was shot as he ran, and it was later said that twenty-eight wounds were found in his body. The rustler side in this war claim that when Champion was first shot down he was only wounded, and asked the men who came up to him not to shoot again, but that one of the party placed his rifle to Champion's face and deliberately shot him as he lay upon the ground. The body of Champion was left with a card pinned to it bearing the inscription, "Cattle Thieves, beware." In Champion's pocket, after his death, there was found a roughly written memorandum of the events of the day as they appeared to him as he was shut in his cabin by the invading party. He told of the suffering of his comrade Ray, stated the hour of Ray's death, mentioned his efforts to get a shot at the men who were firing at him, stated calmly that he did not think he could hold out much longer, and mentioned the appearance of the wagon-load of hay which he knew was to burn him out. Then, as though in deliberate address to his fellows of the range, he wrote, "Boys, I guess it is all up.

Good-bye." Had the fact not been established clearly enough otherwise, it might have been seen from the simple nature of this pitiful little scrawl that the rustler Champion was a brave man. He had long been known and dreaded by the cattle men.

While the siege of the K. C. ranch was in progress, two men came along the trail with a wagon, and owing to the poor management by the leaders of the raiders, these men were allowed to escape, which they did at full speed on the horses which they took from the wagon. It happened that one of these men was Jack Flagg, a man whose brand, , was odious in the eyes of more than one of the cattle men who could here have held him prisoner. Flagg was one of the prominent men among the resident range people who were accused of rustling. His escape meant the ruin of the raiders' expedition. Flagg never drew rein until he had alarmed his friends from the K. C. ranch to the town of Buffalo. In twelve hours all Rustlerdom was alarmed and hurrying to the combat. The town of Buffalo, the county seat of Johnson County, and the headquarters of the free-range element, was at once aroused into that deadly fury which among Western men means but one thing. Immediate war was to be given those who had carried war into this country.

Nor was this war upon the side of the rustlers to be without show of legal justice. It is all very well to say that the principle of the majority is a dangerous principle in the hands of dangerous men; yet how can this principle legally be set aside in any of the forms of this Government, whether in the election of officers national or municipal? Legally speaking, the county of Johnson was as regularly organized as any, and a man who lived there had as good a right to vote

for the officers of that county as has any man of any part of the Union. The residents of Johnson County had legally elected as their sheriff Red Angus, who therefore was the recognised agent of the law. As sheriff, Angus summoned about him a posse of the citizens of Buffalo and vicinity, in numbers sufficient, as he thought, to accomplish the arrest of the invading party of raiders, who of course had no legal status whatever in that country, and who were breaking laws of a nature always held to be higher than those laws which they accused the rustlers of violating. Surely a more dramatic or more involved situation never appeared upon the cow range than this, when two armies, each armed, each able and anxious to kill, met each other to decide an issue—an issue in which both were wrong! In no country but the West of the cattle days could any such situation ever have arisen.

The sheriff had a vast posse at his back when he started forth from Buffalo to arrest the band of cattle men. The latter, knowing what would be the result of their mistake in allowing the two men to escape and spread the news, pushed on as fast as they could into the country where they expected to find others of the men whom they had upon their list as men to be shot, hung, or driven out of the country. They seem little to have known the seriousness of their undertaking, or the sternness of the men against whom they were proceeding, among whom, wrong as they were, were some of the best cowpunchers and hardiest plainsmen of the entire cattle range. The raiders kept their wagons with them as long as they could, and then pushed on ahead, leaving their supplies behind them. In a little while after that the rustlers swarmed in upon the trail, seized the wagons, and took prisoners the teamsters. From that time the invaders ceased to

be the pursuers and became themselves the pursued. They stopped at the T. A. ranch, by this time discovering what the circumstances really were. Here they stood at bay and were surrounded by the forces of the rustlers. There were three hundred and nineteen men in the body which besieged the cattle men at the T. A. outfit, the force being made up of rustlers and rustler sympathizers, with perhaps a great many others who were afraid to refuse the invitation to join the fight.

The cowmen were outnumbered, although they claimed that they expected re-enforcements from a body of Montana cattle men within the week. Yet they were brave as any, and moreover they had intelligence and skill upon their side. They quickly fortified the T. A. ranch with regular rifle pits, barricaded the buildings with logs, made firing stands out of more logs, and really had things in fine shape for a long siege or hot attack. The rustlers constantly increased in numbers and were determined to kill or capture the entire party. Firing was kept up at long range on both sides, though without much damage. One old fellow by the name of Boone, a plainsman with a big buffalo gun, was on the rustlers' side, and was extremely accurate with his fire. He would throw a big bullet against the ranch door or through a window nearly every time he shot. There were twenty-six horses killed in one day in the T. A. corral by the rustler fire, and it must have appeared to the cattle men that they were soon to be set on foot in the middle of a very hostile country. It was never admitted that any of the rustlers were killed in this long-range firing, and the cattle men will not admit that they had any one killed in the fight, though they say that two of their men were accidentally killed. One of them was thrown

by his horse and his rifle accidentally discharged, shooting him through the thigh so that he afterward died. A second man, while hurrying out of the door of the ranch house to go after some water, knocked his own revolver out of its holster, and was so shot through the abdomen, dying later. One of these men was still living at the time of the surrender, and both of them came from the ranks of the cowpunchers who were hired to do the fighting. The siege lasted for three days, the firing being kept up more or less steadily on both sides. The cattle men claim that they knew many of the men in the rustler party were small stock men who were really not in sympathy with the rustlers, and who took pains to fire high when shooting at the ranch house.

While all this was going on, the entire civilized world knew every detail of the combat from day to day. The commanding officer of Fort McKinney, which lay so close to the T. A. ranch that the firing could be heard distinctly all the time, was asked by the county authorities to assist in the capture of the cattle men. This he declined to do, and he also declined to lend the sheriff a cannon or a Gatling gun for use in carrying the barricaded ranch house. The rustlers then began plans for blowing up the ranch house with dynamite, they having found in the captured wagons one hundred pounds of that article intended for use against themselves, and having concluded that it would be well to show the cattle men still more fully the unwelcome situation of being hoist by one's own petard. The commander at Fort McKinney wired his superior officer as to what course he should pursue, and the Government at Washington replied through the general in charge of the Department of the Missouri, stationed at Omaha, that the

officer in command at Fort McKinney should put an end to this armed disturbance, and should turn over his prisoners to the proper authorities, but should not deliver any prisoners into the hands of the opposite faction. On the third day of the siege a troup of cavalry rode out from Fort McKinney carrying a flag of truce, to which the cowmen answered. Their surrender to the United States forces was demanded, and to this they gladly agreed upon the assurance that they would not be turned over to the authorities at Buffalo, which all knew meant the same thing as death. The sheriff demanded these prisoners of the United States troops, but was refused. There was then talk among the rustlers of taking away the prisoners by force and holding them for civil trial at Buffalo. No forcible attempt of this nature, however, was made, although there was very bitter feeling among the rustlers at seeing their invaders escape from them.

The officer in charge of the prisoners was instructed to take them away from the scene of conflict, removing them to Fort Russell, about one hundred miles below. Here, about three weeks after their outset from Cheyenne, without their outfit, without their horses, with two of their fighting men killed and two of their teamsters missing, they arrived at Fort Russell, not in the character of victorious returners, but as prisoners in charge of the United States troops. In condition they were somewhat different from that under which they had started forth. Some of them were sick, all were weary and bedraggled, and all the leaders were willing to admit that they had had enough of *vigilante* work for the time. They admitted that they had been mistaken and had not known what was before them, but still contended that their movement had of itself been just and right.

As every detail of the fight at the T. A. ranch had been given the public through the daily press, so was the report of each day's march of the return given to the world by the press correspondents. The inglorious little "war" attracted a national attention, and was for months the one theme of discussion in the State of Wyoming, where it figured for a long time in State politics, the two factions continuing their fight after they had been obliged to lay down their arms. By one party it was urged that these men should be taken back to Buffalo to be tried there, at the scene of their offence; but all knew what that meant, and the wealth of the cattle men was brought into the legal fight which contested any such dangerous contingency. The men were finally taken by the civil authorities to Laramie, and there succeeded in obtaining what they coveted, a change of venue to Cheyenne, where they were among their friends and on their own ground. The methods of modern law, which they had but a few months ago violated and held in contempt as unsuited to themselves, they now hailed fervently as the one thing to which all men should submit, and gladly enough availed themselves of it as their only means of salvation. So far from desiring to be set free, they clung with ludicrous eagerness to their prison, and actually paid their own expenses to be allowed to remain in jail! This they did for three months, knowing that it would bankrupt any of those scantily populated counties to keep so large a party of prisoners, and they being desirous of anything rather than the boon of liberty just then, since liberty meant danger and imprisonment offered them safety! Their plans were successful, and that law which they had scorned, and under which they now cowered, took care of them better than they perhaps deserved.

It was now the time not of the old West, but the new West. All the wealth and influence of the most heavily populated portions of Wyoming were with the cattle men, and it was foregone that they would not be convicted. When finally heard in court, these men were all set free upon their own personal recognisance, each man charged with the murder of two men, Champion and Ray, and each offence made bailable in a very large sum of money, the total of bail for the forty men or so tried amounting into the millions. This the cattle men were able to produce or to pay if necessary, but of course the Texas fighting men were not. The latter, acting under advice of counsel, left the country, "jumping" their bonds. During the trial of the cause the cattle men were practically given their liberty, being asked to attend at court at certain hours of the day. A list of over one thousand possible jurymen was called, and at a time when not even half of the peremptory challenges of the accused had been exhausted, it became apparent that it would be impossible to get a jury. It was actually seen that the affair was too big for the courts of the State to handle. The prosecution for the State *nolle prossed* the cases. These men were therefore never tried, never acquitted, and yet can not be again arrested on the old charges. There are few of these cattle men who care to speak much about this matter nowadays, and probably most of them still remain enthusiastic supporters of the law of the land to-day; or at least they should if they possess the trait of gratitude. Indeed, the law has gradually taken sway in Rustlerdom as the country has grown older, and now the battles are referred to the courts by both parties to much greater extent. Some of the rustlers have become bold enough to openly forswear the old ways. Some

have turned State's evidence. Yet others are now employed by the cattle men, and make the best cowpunchers possible to be found. In the odd conditions of the range it has already been agreed between these late armed foes that bygones are to be bygones.

Thus ended the last of the great wars of the range, and the only one that has ever been a ludicrous one. It might not have been so much smiled at had it succeeded, but success on either side might have been a very unfortunate thing. The attempt failed partly because the men who made it were not suited for such work. Not plainsmen themselves, they undertook the methods of plainsmen. They might far better have clung to the ways under which they had been born and brought up, and to which they so gladly returned when they found they could not negotiate the ways of the old West. Indeed, their fundamental mistake was one of chronology. Suddenly it had grown too late for the old ways. The old West was gone.

The story of this last attempt at the revival of the past fashions of the West does not make to-day the pleasantest of reading, but it serves after all to show something further of the character of the cowboy. Misguided and impulsive perhaps, he was always eager to be where the fighting was thickest, and there he conducted himself as a man according to the creed under which he had been reared. Creeds change about us; creeds of morals, of religion, of ethics, as the history of the past shows must continually be the case, everything being always relative to some other thing. It may have been a creed outworn which served the cowboy upon the one side or the other of this ignominious little war. Yet it is a singular fact that, ignoble as the part of a hired fighter has always been held to be, no one has ever smiled at the part played by the

cowpuncher supernumerary in this little drama of the range. The centre of the stage was occupied by figures larger financially than himself, but he alone out of all those engaged played through to the end the part for which he had been cast.

CHAPTER XVII.

BEEF AND FREEDOM.

THERE is very great temptation in writing of the American cowboy to tell only the thrilling stories of his life, to paint only the vivid pictures, the material for such treatment being so abundant and the demand for it so pronounced. Yet, perhaps, we can afford to be more just to the man and the country he represented, can afford to read at least a short lesson which would show the cowboy not as a freak, but as a factor. A factor he certainly was in the development of the West. He was precisely the right man in the right place. Therefore he was a factor in the building of America, and as such he deserves a just and definite place in the history of the country—a place where he can be viewed not so much with amusement as with pride, where he can be recognised for what he was, one of the great essential citizens of the land. The cowboy did not make two blades of grass grow where one had grown before, but he caused double the number of cattle to graze upon the unutilized grass which made one of the resources of the land. He was not only a product of the country, but a producer for the country, and he distinctly added to the total of the crude natural wealth quite as much as the farmer who digs such wealth up out of the soil. He brought into the reach of the citizen of America his share of those

incomparable resources which have made that citizen the most fortunate man of the earth. He played his part in that national development which made the American citizen not only the luckiest citizen of the earth, but also the best citizen, the citizen best fitted to uphold a nation's honour and prosperity.

It is no mere catch phrase to say that beef and freedom go together. Compare the beef-eating English with the rice-eating natives of India, or the fruit-eaters of Africa, whom they overwhelm so easily. It is a matter of nationality in the first place, to be sure, but of nationality plus long generations of better food. To go further, both logic and history warrant the conclusion that there is not upon the face of the globe to-day a better fighting man than he who by birth and residence is entitled to be called a citizen of America, because he has been the best-fed man on earth. The cowboy has helped feed that man. He has added to his wealth. For this he deserves an industrial credit as much as does the farmer who also produces wealth, the sailor who carries it, the soldier who defends it. It was the part of the cowboy to aid in the production of food of the most desired and valued sort, a food which but small portions of the inhabitants of the world have ever been able to afford. America has sold beef to the world, but she sold of her surplus and did not stint herself to sell. She gave to Europe what was left over from her own table. Happy has been the American—perhaps how happy he does not stop to think, and perhaps why happy he does not pause to ask. Much of the measure of his good fortune lay in the vast, the apparently inexhaustible treasures of the West. The measure of his ignorance of that good fortune may be seen later on in the history of the nation; seen too soon, perhaps, when the mines of this

wealth shall have been laid open and laid bare, when the American, rich and unreckoning, shall have shared with all the world, and that to his own disadvantage, the wealth that was his native heritage.

The beef of the cattle range makes up but a small percentage of the total of the beef which now comes into the great cattle markets of the United States, for the "granger" has won his fight, and from this time on the farms and the herds will be smaller and smaller. But it is not in the least fanciful to take into estimate the relations of American free beef and American free institutions as well as the American free and fearless character. The beef herders and the beef eaters of history have been winning peoples as far back as we can find in history, and it is not asking too much of history to expect that she shall repeat herself. It is not impossible to predict the quality or the names of those nations which from now on will divide the world among them. These will not be the vegetarian nations. The latter will be eaten up, as the lion eats up the deer.

Almost an overwhelming proportion of the population of the globe, even of the population of Europe, is vegetarian, not by choice but from necessity. The American citizen who goes to Germany for a year's residence learns that in that country many things are held as luxuries which in America are necessaries, expected as matter of course by every American citizen, no matter how poor he be. How often can the German peasant afford even the most miserable bit of inferior meat for his table? It is a feast for the family of such a man if they chance to have that which the American labourer eats as his daily and expected portion. America throws away out of her back door more than would make the German peasantry de-

liriously happy. Moreover, America can afford to do it.

The great bulk of the English lower classes, though the English are the greatest meat-eating nation of Europe, rarely see a bit of beef upon their tables. The labourer of that country may make ten to twenty shillings a week, out of which he is to support himself and family, if he be conscienceless enough to marry and raise a family, as usually he is. Both beef and freedom are far beyond such a man, dreams in which he has no part. Compare the chain forgers and other metal workers of England—men, women, and children, whole families fettered to the bellows and anvil year in and year out, hopeless, continually hungry for even one satisfying meal of but the coarsest bread, to say nothing of a particle of meat—compare such beings with the free cowboy of America. Which should be the better citizen? Whose the better blood to have in a nation's veins? Take the slaves of England's collieries, whose terrible and hopeless lives are passed truly beneath the heel of their civilization, and apparently beneath the consideration alike of hope and of humanity; compare such men with the wild rider of the range, who lives under the big blue sky, who fears no thing that breathes, who has health and energy fairly to throw away in mere surplus of vitality. Which is the better sort of citizen to have behind a nation in the shock of arms or in the shock of years? Well may the slaves of the older civilization long for the beef and the freedom of the West. And if that West be gone, well may we sigh for it ourselves!

The Hindu eats rice and grain, and he sits dreaming by the rivers which have mirrored his same apathetic face for ages. The Russian lives upon wheat and corn, when he is lucky enough to have it from

his own soil or as the gift from rich America to the starving; and behold the children's children of the Russian in sheepskins, and unable, as their fathers were, to do more than make the sign of the cross and the gesture of submission. The Chinese live upon rice and what else they may find; and what are they among the nations? What do such peoples know either of beef or of freedom. We may be too proud to ask a comparison between such men and the inhabitants of this rich and favoured land of ours. No land of the earth has ever been more fully or more variously favoured than this; and never has any, in all the history of the world, shown the sudden expansion and the permanent growth into all the richness of things valuable in national prosperity. It has been a wonderful country, this rich, free land. It has won its wars, and outlived its wounds, and builded well its cities and great works, and bred a race that will live through the centuries. France remembers to-day the beneficence of that monarch the sign of whose wiseness was a public prosperity which enabled every citizen to "have his chicken in the pot." America has put upon every poor man's table as much as that and more, and for that it thanks no sovereign at all. Its treasure-house for such store was largely in the West—that glorious, abounding, open, manly West, where there never was a throne except the saddle—the land *par excellence* of beef and freedom.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE IRON TRAILS.

The settlement of the West went forward by leaps and bounds, along projecting tongues of civilization, which extended far in front of the main body of the population. The demon of unrest drove the American frontiersman to move a dozen times in a generation. The settlers who pressed over the new land rolled on and over in long waves, like a flock of feeding wild pigeons, those in the rear rising and alighting ahead of those who had preceded them; and, moreover, they did this along lines determined by the same reasons which governed the wild pigeons. They went in the line of the least resistance; that is to say, where they could find their food most easily. There is no push so irresistible as that of advancing civilization. The frontiersman dreaded a neighbour, and would be moving yet if there were any place to which he could move. In his journey to the West he followed the farming lands, the hunting regions, the rain belt, and the places where the Indians were least prohibitory in their numbers. Thus his progress was a series of broken leaps, of concentrations and expansions, always forward, and for the most part along the line of latitude upon which he had been born. Of later years the tide of interstate immigration has begun to move from the North to the South, but this has occurred

only since the Western lands suitable for cultivation have been taken up, and in search of the cheap Southern lands which still remain unoccupied.

There came a time in the history of the West when the projecting arms of civilization which extended into the West were crossed at right angles by the scanty population which came up from the southward with the cattle trade as it spread swiftly over the northern range. Thus the open lands of the Northwest and middle West were assailed from two directions at once. It was a singular population which took possession of that wild country, and one whose like we shall hardly see again at any corner of the world. Hunter and trapper, skin hunter, gambler, horse thief, capitalist, cowman, farmer, merchant, artisan, money lender, professional man, desperado and tenderfoot—all mingled in an eddy and boil of tumultuous, vigorous life. Into this new population there came pushing up steadily from the South the cattle of the trail and the men who cared for them. Thus there came yet other new inhabitants, with new customs and a new industry. That was the time when the two trails met, the long trail of the drive and the iron trails which crossed it on their way to the Western ocean.

It was not foreseen what tremendous changes these iron trails would make in the features of the population and the pursuits of the West, nor how unspeakably rapid would be these changes in their coming, yet the changes came so swiftly as to forestall prophecy. Each railroad acted as an irrigating ditch to carry the stream of population out over the unsettled lands. Each little town was the gateway for a series of smaller ditches through which the flood trickled out and around. Far out into the rainless region the wave of people rolled and lessened and trickled, until fairly

swallowed up by the ultimate earth, a soil which refused to yield them a living.

The railroads crossed the continent once, twice, thrice, and yet again. They began to build spurs and side lines, reaching out into all places where there were merchantable things to be carried in or out of the country. It was not long until the railroads saw what a carrying trade there was in the cattle industry of the West. These many thousands of great creatures, the range cattle which came North at the expense of a season's time and a sad per cent of loss, could be handled in a much quicker and safer way. The railroads could do in a few days what the trail outfit needed months to do, and could deliver the cattle with less loss and in better condition. The railroads no longer followed the law of latitude. They took the suggestion of longitude. The iron trails bent down and ran North and South along the old foot-worn trails of the great cattle drives. In the year of 1896 there was but one trail outfit driving cattle North from Texas. Before the days of the railroads there had been hundreds.

Over the iron trails there went out ploughs and mowing machines and harrows and other things strange and unheard of upon the old cow range. The grain lands pressed into the grass lands, and to these growing grain lands, as well as to the remaining range region, the railroads began to carry the horned cattle from the South, from the East, from every direction. They carried cattle from the North to the South, changing the whole breed of the latter country. They carried cattle from the South to the North, changing another breed in turn. Moreover, they carried out wire for fences, and so they sewed the shroud of the old cattle range.

Into even the farthest corners of the cow range the railroads crept. Towns sprang up over the plains; towns where there were steeples, and where houses had paint upon them, something hitherto unheard of in that country. The cow town dwindled away or became disgustingly decorous, its place being taken by the smart and pretentious little city of the new West. A horde of lawyers, doctors, merchants, thieves, and other necessaries swept into each town as quickly as it was organized. Life on the waning frontier became more colourless and less picturesque. Again new customs came in. Hospitality became less generous and suspicion more general. There were locks on the doors.

The wire fences and the fields of the farming man came into evidence wherever stony-hearted Nature would allow the latter to hold his own for a season or so out of every half a dozen; for the Western farmer above all things was hopeful and enduring. The farming communities, or "granger settlements," as the cowmen called them, fed little towns of their own, such towns taking also for a time the trade of the stockmen. Then the cattle trade began under the influence of the railroads to settle and centralize into big permanent cities of much more import and permanence than the old cow towns of the frontier. One heard of Sherman, Denison, Henrietta, Fort Worth, in the South; of Miles City, Laramie, Cheyenne, in the North.

And then there came another time in the history of the West. The iron trails had brought all sorts and conditions of men to this Western country, promising them all sorts of things in addition to those things which they in their ignorance promised themselves. Some of these found the West not so hospita-

ble as they had thought. The "rain belt" proved a most unsatisfactory thing to count upon, though it looked well enough in Western railroad literature to say that it had steadily moved westward and was now shedding regular and beneficent showers alike upon the just and the unjust over such and such lands in the arid portions of the West. The farmers found that corn would not ripen on the high bleak table-lands, that wheat would not do well once in a half dozen plantings. The nights were too cold for some crops, and the days too warm for others. The "rain belt" yielded no rain. It needed the deepest of wells to reach unfailing water. There was no fuel within hundreds of miles. There ensued some seasons of want over great stretches of the newly settled country, and some winters in which hundreds of the "grangers" actually froze to death in the severe storms which found them unprepared. Back from large areas of Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas the discouraged settlers began to sweep, and the antelope resumed the feeding grounds from which they had been temporarily driven.* The cowboy followed the antelope back again over some of this natural range. Then in time came the resultant of all these many forces, the "sag" in the

* A newspaper paragraph printed in May, 1897, has the following information, *apropos* to the above: "The towns of Woodsdale, Moscow, Springfield, and Fargo, in Kansas, which had a population of 1,100 in 1890, have now only a population of eighteen, according to a correspondent of the United States Investor. Hugoton has three families out of the 400 that used to live there. Nine children go to the $10,000 schoolhouse, and there is standing, like a monument of folly, a water-works system that cost some Eastern plutocrat $36,000. The town never paid a cent of principal or interest on all this and never will."—E. H.

cattle business, and the final readjustment under the exacter system of later days.

The edge was worn off the frontier by the grind of the wheels of civilization. It became fashionable to speak of law and order, of city improvements, of Eastern capital, of future growth of the city, and all that. Politics began to be considered, and all the ways of older society came into effect. The men of the wilder and freer West who made a good part of the new population were not the ones to oppose all this. As they had made it possible, so now they aided in making it permanent. The old citizen of the West became the new citizen. Changing with his fellows, the cowboy now became a steady, quiet, faithful, and hard-working man, following his trade as he had learned it in the past, though now under conditions very different.

The centre of the cattle industry had now shifted entirely from the South to the North, Wyoming and Montana furnishing the bulk of the range beef instead of Texas. Always the cattle in the long train loads going to the markets had shorter and shorter horns. Always the hatband of the Northern cowboy became narrower and narrower. Far down in the Spanish Southwest, in the remote and desert country where even the boldest granger dared not venture, the ways of the past were slowest to yield to change, and the cowpuncher retained more fully something of his old-time picturesqueness; for there the iron trails met iron customs and the stony apathy of centuries of calm.

If the cowpuncher lost something of his old-time picturesqueness as a Western type, the change did not rob him entirely of his innate traits and characteristic habits, nor did it change materially the routine of his duties. The old ways of the range, the ways invented by the unknown old Spaniard centuries ago, remained

somewhat or much the same. The mark and the brand were still the title of ownership, and the round-up still the recognised means of establishing the cowman's wish for justice. The day's routine, the work of the drive, the round-up, the corral, remained much the same. Then, as ever, the life of the cowboy was one taking him far from the settlements and into such narrow solitudes as remained. He still needed his traits of courage, skill, and independence of action. He was still a cowboy. All the nation knew him now. His vogue was greatest at the beginning of the end of his short day. Changed though he was in minor extent, he had now blended with the life of his country. He had become a citizen. He was a part of the warp of an interwoven web of humanity, though still he made a dash of colour upon the growing monotone.

CHAPTER XIX.

SUNSET ON THE RANGE.

The great law which rules all animate life compels all creatures to wage continual war with their surroundings, yet teaches them that they may best win in that war by compromise with the surroundings. Each creature partakes of the soil that bore it. We are all not ourselves, but the reflection of that which was about us.

The great West, vast and rude, brought forth men also vast and rude. We pass to-day over parts of that matchless region, and we see the red hills and ragged mountain fronts cut and crushed into huge indefinite shapes, to which even a small imagination may give a human or more than human form. In the "frozen music" of the broken buttes there may lie models for some future architect.

That same great hand which chiseled out these monumental forms and phases laid its fingers upon the people of this region. Rude and ironlike, their nature simulated that of the stern faces set about them. Into their hearts came the elemental disturbance of the storm, the strength of the hills, the broadness of the prairies. They lay in the cradle of solitude, swung by the hand of calm. These babes of the West were giants, because that was a land of giants. Among their own people, who stood about them unseen and

unknown, they grew to their full stature. Never shall that stature lessen! Never shall they pass away! The Indian, the hunter, the plainsman, the cowboy will not die. They will but pass back among their people, whence they came. They will vanish again upon the edge of the plains. They will look down upon us from the hills in some immortal form!

Of all these babes of the primeval mother, the West, the cowboy was perhaps her dearest, because he was her last. Some of her children lived for a century, others for half that time; this one for not a triple decade before he began to be old. Knowing for him that which he did not know, the West foresaw the time when he too would ride away into the hills and never come back again; yet none the less she smiled upon him, with the slow smile of elemental mysteries—that smile which rests upon stone lips by the banks of the Nile, and upon the lips of the faces in the Rockies.

What was really the life of this child of the wild region of America, and what were the conditions of the life that bore him can never be fully known by those who have not seen the West with wide eyes. Those who did not, but who looked superficially and superciliously, remembering only their own surroundings, and forgetting that in the eye of Nature one creature is as good as another if only it prevail where it stands, were content with distorted views of that which they saw about them. Having no perspective in their souls, how could they find it in their eyes? They saw colour but not form in these wild men of the wild country. They saw traits, but did not see the character beneath them. Seeking to tell of that which they had not seen, they became inaccurate and unjust. Dallying with the pleasant sensation of exciting themes, they

became grotesque instead of strong in their handling of them.

The cowboy was simply a part of the West. He who did not understand the one could never understand the other. Never was any character more misunderstood than he; and so thorough was his misrepresentation that part of the public even to-day will have no other way of looking at him. They see the wide hat and not the honest face beneath it. They remember the wild momentary freaks of the man, but forget his lifetime of hard work and patient faithfulness. They insist upon the distorted mask, and ask not for the soul beneath it. If we care truly to see the cowboy as he was, and seek to give our wish the dignity of a real purpose, the first intention should be to study the cowboy in connection with his surroundings. Then perhaps we may not fail of our purpose, but come near to seeing him as he actually was, the product of primitive, chaotic, elemental forces, rough, barbarous, and strong. Then we shall love him; because at heart each of us is a barbarian too, and longing for that past the ictus of whose heredity we can never eliminate from out our blood. Then we shall feel him appeal to something hid deep down in our common nature. And this is the way in which we should look at the cowboy of the passing West; not as a curiosity, but as a product; not as an eccentric driver of horned cattle, but as a man suited to his times.

The study of the cattle trade is essential to a study of the cowboy, and hence the wish to speak broadly of the varying conditions of that trade. Finally we must come to those widespread changes of condition which have changed or will soon have changed fundamentally the entire industry. We have

seen the forces working against the permanency of the great industry of cattle ranching. The small landholder, the sheep herder, the fence builder and the irrigator are the great enemies of the cattle man. Perhaps of all these the one most to be dreaded is the last one. The man who brings water upon the arid lands of the West changes the entire complexion of a vast country, and with it the industries of that country. This irrigation may be by means of artesian wells or by use of the natural streams. Already there are thousands of acres of soil as rich as any of the world which are now redeemed from the desert and changed into fertile farming lands. These are added to the realm of the American farmer. They are stolen from the realm of the American cowboy. The valleys of Montana and Wyoming, when placed "under the ditch," produce corn as good as any of Iowa or Illinois, wheat as good as that of Dakota, oats and barley in similar abundance, and fruits of like size and excellence. Wherever such things are possible, good-bye to the days of grass feed and cattle driving, for their time is past. The old Spaniard who taught us the cattle trade also taught us irrigation; but he handed us the two together, little thinking that the one would destroy the other.

Not all the open range will ever be farmed, but very much will go under irrigation which is now thought to be irreclaimable. The great artesian wells which have been sunk in Dakota, Colorado, and other parts of the West have produced results so strangely vast in their significance that it is impossible to predict where they may finally arrive. Artesian water was first used to open up thousands of acres for the cattle man; but it will take all these acres away again, and many more, and give them to the farmer of the

future. The constitution of the chief cattle State of the Union safeguards the title of the running water to the people as a gift of Nature; yet eventually the water will be used by many instead of a few. Each of these will take his share of the wild farm of the cowboy. These factors remain as yet unformulated, but their suggestion is very strong in its trend, and a review of them can lead to but one conclusion.

Singularly enough, at the time of the writing of these lines, there is in progress at a city in western Nebraska a great "irrigation fair," the first of its kind in the history of that part of the country. This fair exploits the possibilities of the soil when under irrigation. Thousands of people have come together there, among these many Indians and cowboys and old-time men of the plains. In faint imitation of the days of the past, the town is run "wide open." It is reported that the scenes of '69 and '70 are repeated. The cowboys are riding their horses into the saloons as they did in the days of the early drives. It is sought to revive the spirit of that old West which is really dead beyond the reach of all our lamentations. Do many pause to consider how dramatic a scene this really is, this irrigation fair at which the cowboy is asked to attend as a curiosity, as an attraction? Does he himself know what it is that they are asking him to do? They ask him to disport himself in a Titanic shadow-dance, and to close his play by blowing into its final flare the dwindling flame of his own candle.

The West has changed. The old days are gone. The house dog sits on the hill where yesterday the coyote sang. The fences are short and small, and within them grow green things instead of gray. There are many smokes now rising over the prairie, and they are wide and black instead of thin and blue.

As we look out in the evening light from where we stand, we may see the long shining parallels of the iron trail reaching out into the sunset. A little busy town lies near, flanked with fields of grain ready for the harvesting. There are cattle; not those of "deformed aspect," which Coronado saw when he walked across this country in the gray of other days, but sleek, round beasts, which stand deep in crops their ancestors never saw. In the little town is the hurry and bustle of modern life, even here, upon the extreme edge of the well-settled lands. For this is in the West, or what is now known as the West. It is far out upon what may now, as well as any place, be called the frontier, though really the frontier is gone. Guarding its ghost, watching over its grave, here stands a little army post, once one of the pillars, now one of the monuments of the West.

The routine of the uncomplaining men who make the army goes on here still, as it does all over the land. One has seen the forming of the troops to-day, over there, upon the parade ground. As evening comes he can hear the song of the trumpets, music to tingle in his hair. As the sun drops to the edge of the plains there comes the boom of a cannon at the fort, and fluttering down its staff falls the flag which waves over East and West and South and North alike, alike over the present and the past.

Out from the little "settlement" in the dusk of evening, always facing toward where the sun is sinking, rides a figure we should know. He threads the little lane among the fences, following the guidance of hands other than his own, a thing he would once have scorned to do. He rides as lightly and as easily as ever, sitting erect and jaunty in the saddle, his reins held high and loose in the hand whose fingers turn up

daintily, his whole body free yet firm in the saddle with the seat of the perfect horseman. His hat still sweeps up and back in careless freedom of fashion. It is dusk, and we may not see his trappings. Let us hope his belt is still about his waist, his spurs still jingling as he rides. His pony is the same or much the same as when we saw it many years ago coming up the street of a very different town. It trots steadily forward, with the easy movement of the animal accustomed to long distances. The two, man and horse, show up strongly in the unreal light of evening on the plains. They seem to rise and move strangely as one looks, seem to grow strangely large and indistinct. Yet they melt and soften and so define; and at length, as the red sun sinks quite to the level of the earth, the figures of both show plainly and with no touch of harshness upon the Western sky.

The cowboy as he rides on, jaunty, erect, virile, strong, with his eye fixed perhaps on the ridge miles away, from which presently there may shine a small red light to hold his gaze, now looks about him at the buildings of the little town. As the boom of the cannon comes, and the flag drops fluttering down to sleep, he rises in his stirrups and waves his hat to the flag. Then, toward the edge, out into the evening, he rides on. The dust of his riding mingles with the dusk of night. We can not see which is the one or the other. We can only hear the hoof beats passing, boldly and steadily still, but growing fainter, fainter, and more faint.

ADDENDA.

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In the early days of the northern range the rancher had a double reason for the dirt roof which he put upon his house. It was not only the warmest and most easily constructed roof possible for him in his remote part of the world, but it was also the safest. In the frontier times the outlying ranch houses were often attacked by Indians. Even yet there are ranch houses standing on the range whose sides are pierced by the loopholes which were once so necessary. Against the dugout of the cowman the Indian was well-nigh powerless. He dared not approach under the deadly rifle fire of the defenders, nor could he set on fire the roof of the ranchman's castle, one of the sturdiest and most effectual fortresses that ever formed the outposts of a civilization. Sometimes the cowman had a tunnel dug back from his dugout, connecting it with another building not far away, or leading farther back up the hill to a better fighting place. Such precautions were not common, but they instance the skill and determination of these men, who never intended to relinquish their grip upon the land they had discovered.

As time wore on the old-time cowman might be so wedded to the dirt-covered house which had served him in the past that he would never seek to change it. The cowman who remained an "old batch" was very apt to find his dugout or his cabin good enough for him. If, however, he married and was urged to take a step or so up in the world, he might build him a better ranch house, perhaps making his roof on the home ranch building of shingles or using sawn lumber about the place to an extent which would have been impossible in the early days. The new

man from the East, who had not grown up in the cattle trade, and who had been accustomed to better houses in his youth than had the old-timer, would be very apt to go to some extent of expense and trouble to put himself up a ranch house a little more ambitious than the dugout or the rude cabin, this more especially for the home camp where he intended to reside when on the range. The line camps or out-dwellings for the men would still be of the old style—the walls perhaps of logs or sod, the roof being perhaps laid with rude half tiles hollowed out of divided saplings, and laid so that they "broke joints," the edges of two convex ones fitting in the hollow of one concaved, so that the water would thus be carried off as it is on a tiled roof so fitted. A covering of dirt usually completed this rude provision for the shedding of the rain. In the later days boards were used in fitting up a roof, but the commonest way was to lay a rude covering of small logs or poles, then a thin thatching of willow boughs and grass, covering the whole with a layer of dirt. Such a roof was very apt to leak, but, as the cowboy had not very much need for the roof at best, he did not mind so trifling a thing as that.

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It is a peculiarity even of the wildest range cattle that they must have water at frequent intervals. The more they lose their wild quality, the more often they need water, and the wilder they are the safer they are in their contest with the elements. The horses will paw through the snow, but the cattle will not. The horses will stay out on the hills, where the snow is thin, feeding there and not crowding down to the valleys and creek beds after water. The cattle have not so much sagacity, and it is a common sight to see the valleys of the water ways crowded with them during the winter time at the very points where the snow lies deepest. Here they will huddle up and silently starve, hanging about the watering place and refusing to go out on the hills to feed. A part of the work of the cowboys at such a time is to drive these animals away from the valleys up to the broken country back from the streams, where they can find a little feed. Sometimes trails are broken up from the valleys by the cowboys, who ride their plunging ponies back and forth and finally form

a roadway over which the cattle can be driven out from the death trap into which they have come and which they refuse to abandon. It has even been the case in more recent days that a rude snowplough has been made and used to open a trail for the cattle back from such a deadly valley where they were perishing. The instinct of the cattle thus appears to be not always a wise one. Sometimes, in their eagerness to get at the coveted water which is sealed away from them by the ice, they crowd in numbers out upon the ice of a considerable stream. It has happened that the ice in such an event has broken, many scores of cattle thus being drowned.

The salvation of the cattle upon a wide extent of the northern range lies in the Chinook wind, that strange, warm current of air which sometimes in the winter season comes over the summit of the upper Rockies, suffusing far out to the east of the mountains the mild breath of the Japan current of the Pacific Ocean. Its effect may be felt perhaps nearly across the State of Montana, and in some cases as far south as Wyoming or parts of Colorado. When the ranchman who has been witnessing his cattle perishing about him in the snow sees the mountain tops begin to look black and ominous, he sighs in relief, for he knows that the "black wind" of the Indians is coming. Violently this wind blows, and suddenly all the air is soft and mild. The snow does not melt, but simply vanishes, passing away as though by magic. Then the cattle may drink and may feed. It is the armistice offered them by Nature. Feebly the living abandon the dead and seek to gain what strength they may for the continuance of the battle when it shall again close in upon them.

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If it be during the springtime, the cowpuncher may meet yet another curious feature of the range life as he rides on his daily round. As he passes over a patch of the short gray sagebrush or a bit of grass longer than the average, perhaps even a piece of ground apparently almost bare, his trained eye may catch a glimpse of an object which the inexperienced observer would never note at all. Something in the look of the motionless, shapeless thing lying flat on the ground invites a second and sharper gaze. The cowpuncher dismounts, and pulls up by

the ear a little young calf, which has been lying sprawled out as close to the ground as it could lie, making not the slightest sound or movement to attract the attention of any creature passing by. The cattle of the range are almost as wild as the elk or antelope or deer, and their ways are very similar in many respects. The mother of this little calf has perhaps found it necessary to go five or ten miles to water, and she has told the calf to lie down and keep perfectly still, no matter what may happen, knowing very well that this is the safest way for it to escape the eye or the nose of the wolf, the coyote, or any other enemy which would be apt to assail it during her absence. Thus does the mother deer or antelope "*cache*" her offspring while away feeding or at water, and it is astonishing how effective is this ruse of the mother heart. The hunter may pass within a few feet of the little antelope and never see it, so closely does it blend in colour with the surrounding tone of the landscape. The young calf may be betrayed by its redder coat, but it will be as motionless as the antelope kid. The cowboy picks it up with his rude playfulness, but as soon as he lets it go it falls flat and motionless again, hugging the ground as tightly as it can and obeying to the letter the injunction of instinct. But the little calf has not yet learned more than what instinct has taught it. Its mother has been gone for some time, and in its confused young mind it thinks that perhaps this other big creature has come to take charge of it in place of its mother. If the cowboy stays about the calf long, picks it up several times, or pays it much attention, the little thing will after awhile come toddling along after him, its long legs wobbling and stumbling as it walks. At times the cowboy finds it wise to earmark this calf where it is found, if he be clear in his own conscience that it belongs to his outfit; but even after the cutting with the knife the little calf may not understand that it should not follow away this big creature, and will come after the cowboy even after he has mounted and started to ride away. Then the cowboy gets down again from his horse and pushes the calf down on the ground again, and teaches it as well as he can that it must stay there and wait for its mother. He knows how quickly the young of wild animals, the antelope, the deer, or even the buffalo, will lose the instinctive wildness at this period of its life, and follow

away a captor without any compulsion. The writer has seen young buffalo calves, which were left loose and were suckling domestic cows about camp, refuse to run away and join the wild buffalo, a herd of which were standing less than a quarter of a mile away. Two weeks later one of these calves would follow the wagon without being tied, and showed no disposition to escape. A hunter who takes young wild animals for the Zoölogical Gardens at Washington says that a fawn which is found *cached* by its dam will often follow its captor within a few moments, and that the kids of the antelope need but very little attention to make them entirely docile and reconciled to captivity.

But if it chances that the cowpuncher finds his calf *cached* near by a little bunch of cattle, or perhaps sees several calves surrounded by a few cows or a number of other range cattle, he does not get off his horse and attempt to handle the calves. He knows that should he do so he would be charged furiously by the band of cattle, and that he would be fortunate if he escaped serious injury. If he is thus charged, his one concern is to get to his horse as fast as possible, for once he is mounted the cattle will leave him alone. They understand him then, though when he is on foot he is to them simply a wild animal and a probable enemy.

THE END.

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